

Rapid City, South Dakota Summer Nights Recommendations

March 2014



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In September of 2013 Roger Brooks International was retained to look at Rapid City's Summer Nights event and answer a number of questions:

- Should Summer Nights continue?
- What night of the week should it take place?
- What hours should it take place?
- How many weeks should it operate?
- Where should it be located?

To help answer these questions, Roger Brooks visited Rapid City and interviewed more than 40 stakeholders. These stakeholders included downtown business owners, property owners, Leadership Rapid City (producer of the event), city staff including the police department, elected officials, Destination Rapid City, Chamber of Commerce, arts organizations, Rapid City transit, and many others.

Roger Brooks and his team also researched other cities in the U.S. that hold similar events where a primary thoroughfare is closed to accommodate a weekly event. We looked into 30 of these cities, and we interviewed half of them to learn of their experiences with their events, possible remedies and ideas that might be applicable to the Summer Nights event in Rapid City.

Using our 33 years experience working with downtowns and communities throughout the United States, Canada and Western Europe (more than a thousand), as well as the input from local interviews and comparative research, we developed a number of recommendations. These recommendations are below, organized as responses to each of the questions.

SHOULD SUMMER NIGHTS CONTINUE?

Absolutely. It is very rare to find an event that is as well attended and embraced as Summer Nights. In fact, most cities would give just about anything to have a weekly event like Summer Nights: An event that is geared to local residents, bringing them together as friends and neighbors; a way for families to connect with each other in a terrific environment.

Here are ten reasons why Summer Nights should continue:

1. Experiences such as those described by this quote: "I've never been to an event where I have genuinely just as much fun as my grandkids."
2. The event creates a strong connection to Ellsworth Airforce Base through volunteer opportunities.
3. It creates a renewed sense of volunteerism.
4. The event returns nearly \$25,000 a year to local organizations.
5. It educates locals and visitors about what downtown Rapid City offers in terms of retail shops, restaurants and services. It exposes people to new businesses that might not have the budgets to advertise their offerings to as many people as they get exposure to during this one evening a week event.
6. It brings 10,000 potential customers to the front doors of restaurants, banks, services and retailers. This is why malls across America bring carnivals to their parking lots – to attract the potential customers. While many retailers may say that it pulls people out of their stores (or the mall in this example), mall owners have found the opposite to be true. While sales may not spike during the event, sales, overall, increase because it brings a renewed "top of mind awareness" that the mall and its businesses are there for them.

7. The youth volunteers learn valuable leadership skills, responsibility and the importance of giving back to the community. This is a primary benefit of the Summer Nights program.
8. The event adds culture through music to downtown Rapid City.
9. It's a community celebration: "Hey neighbor, I haven't seen you since last summer!"
10. Summer Nights gives visitors an additional reason to spend more time – and money – in downtown Rapid City. The area hosts approximately four million visitors a year, a large percentage of those during the summer months, and the top activity of visitors, in the world, is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly, intimate setting. This is where 80% of all non-lodging visitor spending takes place.

There are even more reasons than this, but a member of the Rapid City Police Department noted that "it's a whole lot easier to police 20% of the population in a two or three block area of downtown than when they're at home all over Rapid City." And, on another note, the Police Department has had very few issues with people or the event, and, in fact, supports the event.

In our interviews not one single person was against seeing Summer Nights continue. In fact, virtually everyone interviewed wants it to continue. The benefits of Summer Nights for the entire community are many.

ON WHAT NIGHT OF THE WEEK SHOULD SUMMER NIGHTS TAKE PLACE?

In our research we found that most of these types of events take place on Thursday or Friday evenings, and a few take place on Saturdays during the day. Most of the Saturday events were farmers market-style events.

We strongly recommend that the event continue on Thursday evenings for several reasons:

1. It's a terrific early kick-off to the weekend and the next morning with "Thank God it's Friday." It stretches the "weekend" from Thursday evening to Sunday evening.
2. Thursdays are traditionally slower retail sales days, so this is a great way to bring people downtown on an otherwise traditionally slow evening.
3. Weekends are typically consumed with household chores, shopping (without interruptions in traffic or parking), and weekend excursions or getaways, such as heading to other communities in the Black Hills, or visiting friends and relatives, or visiting other area attractions such as Reptile Gardens and dozens of others.
4. Thursday night is typically a stronger night than other weekdays in terms of dining out. People are over the Wednesday "hump day" mentality and are ready to "get out of the house."
5. Using a process of elimination, Thursday always wins. This is perhaps why nearly all similar events take place on Thursday evenings.

Sunday is the one evening when people are most likely to stay home. They are getting ready for the work or school-week, it's a big television ratings evening, and it's also, for most people, a day of worship.

Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays are very busy: at home, work or school. They are the days when people traditionally are buckled down getting things done. Their minds are not on outside activities. This also applies to Thursdays, but after four days (Monday through Thursday) people are mentally ready for a break, so Thursday evening is a perfect time for that break.

They are then refreshed for Friday, and it gives them a great kick-off for the weekend.

6. Finally, if it were to take place on another weekday (Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday), the same issues would arise that affect the business of some retailers. It should not take place on the weekends for the reasons noted above.

RECOMMENDATION #1

We recommend that Summer Nights continue and remain on Thursday evenings, as do many similar events in communities around the country.

WHAT HOURS SHOULD SUMMER NIGHTS TAKE PLACE?

Currently Summer Night runs from 5:30 to 9:30 every Thursday evening for 13 weeks of the year. But set-up of the event has traditionally started at 1:30 in the afternoon with streets closed as of 2:00 to 2:30.

For obvious reasons, it should remain an evening event. During the day residents are at work, at school, or are otherwise occupied. This is why the highest-rated television shows take place during “prime time” between 5:00 and 10:00 pm. People are back home.

It should end, as it does now, at 9:30 p.m. with packing-up taking place until 10:00 p.m. Here are the reasons why:

People are, more and more, living or staying downtown in hotels, or upper story apartments and condominiums. This is a growing trend, and encouraging downtown residential development is a priority for most towns and cities across America. As of 10:00 p.m., all live music, street noise and other activities that would interfere with the “winding down” process should stop. So completing the event at 9:30 should remain in effect.

When should the event start? We considered different scenarios: starting the event at 4:00, 5:00, 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. and on the half-hours.

Summer Nights currently begins at 5:30 for many reasons: Rather than head home after work, people can just remain downtown. In fact, the idea is to get those who are off work at 5:00 to actually help volunteer their time for set-up, or hop on over to their favorite haunt and have a drink, or do a little shopping prior to the start of the event.

Another benefit of starting at 5:30 is that rather than create a “rush hour” of people leaving work, and then a second “rush hour” of people heading to the event – they come to work and just stay. This reduces traffic and parking concerns and coordinates the timing of the event seamless with downtown workers who are already there.

Next, 5:30 is traditionally the beginning of the dining hour. Most restaurants open for dinner and drinks at 5:00, but the busiest dining hours are between 6:00 and 7:30 according to the National Restaurant Association. So bringing 10,000 hungry event participants downtown during the dinner hour is good news for both vendors and restaurants.

Finally, we are gradually moving to the “European Standard” in the United States. People are eating and shopping later and later in the evening hours, as is common in Europe. A full seventy percent of all bricks-and-mortar shopping now takes place after 6:00 p.m. This applies to both locals and visitors. In the 1960s most retailers were closed on Sundays and only open until 6:00 p.m. during the week and on Saturdays. In the 1970s retailers started opening Sundays from noon to 5:00, until 6:00 on Saturdays and until 8:00 or 9:00 on weekdays. Now you will not find a successful mall or lifestyle retail center that isn’t open until 9:00 or even 10:00 p.m. seven nights a week.

Having something fun to do on a Thursday evening animates your downtown on what would otherwise be a slow night with not much going on.

The final question is the set-up time for the event. It takes dozens of volunteers several hours to set up staging, fencing, vendor booths, and activities, and, in the past, Summer Nights has begun the process at about 1:30 in the afternoon with streets closed at 2:00. That has caused a disruption for many retailers.

To make this program work and address those concerns, Summer Nights has agreed to the following time schedule:

- 8:00 a.m. – Put up signs in front of parking spaces alerting downtown workers and customers that there is no parking after 3:00 p.m.
- 2:30 p.m. – Event Staff (cadets) will go into businesses to alert customers that the street will be closed as of 3:00.
- 3:00 p.m. – Remaining vehicles in the event zone would be towed and the streets closed at that time. Not at 2:55 or even

2:59 – but at 3:00. Some businesses have complained that volunteers get overly aggressive and start closing the streets earlier than required.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Because the event needs approximately three hours of set-up time, we recommend the event begin at 6:00 p.m. instead of 5:30. Many of the vendors will already be open by 5:30, but the music will not start until 6:00. This serves two purposes:

1. It allows an hour between the end of the work day and the start of the event. This provides ample time for happy-hour drinks with friends or co-workers, even time for dinner for those who want an early sit-down dining experience before the music starts. AND it provides a ample time for a full shopping experience so attendees can shop the shops between work and the start of the event.
2. Many of the retail businesses close at 6:00 and so this schedule coincides with their operating hours. They close at 6:00 and this is when the music begins.

RECOMMENDATION #3

We recommend that all barricades include signage that is non-threatening. One of the major issues with Summer Nights is a perception that the event portrays a “bully” attitude that presents a “get out of the way, we’re coming in” feeling that is off-putting to both merchants and customers.

The signage should read:

GETTING READY FOR SUMMER NIGHTS!

We need your parking space at 2:30 today.

Please move your car prior to 2:30 p.m.

Cars will be towed at 3:00. Thank you and we’ll see you tonight!

The signs should include a QR code that people can click on with a smart phone to find out where their car is located, should it get towed.

RECOMMENDATION #4

We recommend that cadets and volunteers wear “Event Staff” t-shirts with the Summer Nights logo on it. This makes Summer Nights is a much friendlier appearing event. Some people have commented that the volunteers and staff use “Gestapo tactics” to bully businesses and customers into “compliance” with their rules. Presenting a friendly appearance will help change that impression.

HOW MANY WEEKS SHOULD THE EVENT TAKE PLACE?

The event is called Summer Nights for a reason: It takes place during the summer months, beginning the first Thursday of June and running until the Thursday prior to Labor Day. We looked at the possibility of the event occurring every other Thursday, or for a shorter period, and it didn’t make an sense to shorten the event, for several reasons:

1. It needs to take place every Thursday not every other Thursday. People don’t have to consult their calendars or ask, “Is Summer Nights this Thursday or next Thursday?” It’s every Thursday from 6:00 pm to 9:30. This is about people, and people like continuity and familiarity. The consistency helps the event succeed.
2. The average attendance at Summer Nights is more than 10,000, and that number is growing as more and more people

attend and bring friends and family with them. One of the recommendations in this plan is to also make it a visitor event, and visitors are in the area every Thursday during the summer months. This is a great opportunity to introduce them to downtown Rapid City.

3. Attendance is strong every single week of the event, proving that it is not more than people want in terms of number of weeks. In fact, because residents love it so much, they've asked that it be extended past Labor Day, giving rise to the Main Street Square event Autumn Nights, which takes place through September.

RECOMMENDATION #5

The event should continue as it currently does, and has for the past seven years, every Thursday evening for 12 to 13 weeks – from the first Thursday in June to the Thursday prior to Labor Day.

RECOMMENDATION #6

A growing trend in tourism, across North America, is to “arrive as a visitor, leave as a local.” Visitors want to mingle and get to know the people in the community as much as they want to experience your attractions. As noted before, the number one activity of visitors in the world (not the reason they come, but the top activity) is shopping, dining and entertainment in a pedestrian-friendly setting. And, as noted earlier, this is where 80% of all non-lodging spending takes place. Why do you think Disney built Downtown Disney next to each of its parks? To get that 80% spending. This also applies to downtown Rapid City, and it was a primary driver towards the development of Main Street Square.

This recommendation includes developing a rack card or brochure promoting Summer Nights, print 10,000 copies, and have it distributed to all local and area hotels (throughout the Black Hills, not just Rapid City) promoting the event to visitors.

Point: If you don't hang out in downtown Rapid City, neither will visitors. They go where you, as locals, go. This is why Summer Nights can also become a major visitor draw. And these visitors, who don't already know what you have to offer downtown, will discover dozens of retailers and restaurants they might not otherwise have found.

RECOMMENDATION #7

Work with the Rapid City Convention & Visitors Bureau and Black Hills and Badlands Tourism Association to help promote the event to visitors. It should be included in local and regional visitors guides, and they can assist with distributing the rack card in area visitor information centers and kiosks.

Rationale: Look at the attractions that draw people to the Black Hills: Badlands National Park, Custer State Park, Crazy Horse Memorial, Mt. Rushmore, the towns of Keystone, Deadwood, Sturgis, Hill City, the Pinnacles and many, many other attractions. Ninety percent of these are daytime activities.

The average visitor is active 14 hours a day, yet they spend only four to six hours with the primary attraction that draws them to the area. How many hours can you spend at Mt. Rushmore or the Crazy Horse Memorial, or at a water park or hiking, or visiting Custer State Park? When people come back “home” to their hotel they want something to do other than sitting in front of the television twiddling their thumbs. Summer Nights gives them a solid reason to get out and discover what downtown Rapid City has to offer.

If Summer Nights could run 20 weeks a year and multiple nights per week, it would become a “must do” activity of visitors, who are in town more often than just the 13 Thursdays Summer Nights is held. But we won't delve into that discussion – this just demonstrates why the event should continue its 12 to 13 Thursdays each summer.

WHERE SHOULD SUMMER NIGHTS BE LOCATED?

This is the biggest and toughest question of this project. Seven years ago Rapid City Downtown Association asked Summer Nights to hold the event downtown. Why? To assist with the revitalization effort and to help bring locals back downtown, which was dying like many other downtowns across America.

The top four revitalization tactics across America include:

1. Creating plaza areas (thus the development of Main Street Square)
2. Orchestrating the business mix to include more retail, dining and entertainment and activating them in the evening hours. The future of downtowns is to be the place residents go after dinner and on weekends.
3. Permanent, year-round public markets.
4. Producing and hosting weekly downtown festivals and events.

We researched and interviewed dozens of communities that host similar weekly events where downtown streets are closed to vehicular traffic, and 70% of the retailers we researched supported and see benefits from the event. Those that don't directly benefit are businesses offering products or services that don't fit the audience that time of day or that day of the week. This might include sewing machine repair, legal and other professional services, hardware stores, wig store, gun shops, etc.

It's important to point out that while event attendees might not bring a sewing machine with them to Summer Nights, they now know that a sewing machine repair shop exists downtown, and may use that service another time.

For example, downtown Rapid City is home to First Stop Guns. Chances are pretty good that if I were to attend Summer Nights I won't buy a gun while at the event, for several reasons. First, I wouldn't want to lug around a weapon during the event. I certainly wouldn't want to show it to friends or family members because I'd probably start a panic in the streets. I would simply make that purchase another day or night. The merchant didn't lose a sale, it just moved to a different day.

If I lived in Rapid City and wanted to purchase a gun, and I wasn't attending Summer Nights, I would decide not to buy the gun on Thursday afternoons or evenings (the store is only open until 6:00 pm) and fight the parking and crowds. Instead I'd buy that gun on a different day. Once again, the merchant did not lose the sale – it just shifted to another day.

Finally, having 10,000 people, locals or visitors, learn that there IS a gun shop downtown is terrific. As a visitor, I have no idea whether or not there are any other gun shops anywhere else in or near Rapid City. But I DO know about this one because I was enticed to come downtown, and while there I discovered it. Additionally, because I looked in the windows I know that they sell far more merchandise than just guns. However, I still would not make a weapons purchase on Thursday evenings during Summer Nights, I'd simply come back another day or evening.

While there is no hard and fast research proving this point, it's common sense that these businesses may see a decline in retail sales 12 or 13 Thursdays between perhaps 2:00 and 6:00, but chances are good that the sales still took place – just on different days. In fact, if you were to look at annual sales prior to Summer Nights compared to after Summer Nights began, we'd venture to guess that sales have increased or stayed the same, but not decreased because of the event. Of course many issues – other than Summer Nights – can affect a business, but most of the businesses that tend to complain about an event like this are not "impulse buy" businesses but are service-oriented businesses and those that are appointment-only businesses (hair salons, spas, wedding shops, photography studios).

The exposure of having 10,000 people there is tremendous. Once again, this is why malls host carnivals and fair-style rides in their parking lots. Not to get sales that very same moment in time, but to let people know, and to remind customers, that they exist.

For decades downtowns have been dying as local residents moved to the suburbs and the malls and retailers went with them. Events, like Summer Nights, have been key to bringing those resident BACK downtown, as has been the case in Rapid City with Main Street Square and Summer Nights.

For this project we looked at places to host the event including the city-owned parking lot at the southeast corner of 6th and St. Joseph Streets, along St. Joseph Street, down 7th Street (only), down 6th Street, along Main Street, along Rapid Street, in Memorial Park and many other options.

We also inventoried the businesses along Main Street between 5th and Mt. Rushmore Boulevard, along St. Joseph Street between 5th and Mt. Rushmore Boulevard, on 7th from Main to St. Joseph and along 6th from Main to St. Joseph.

Then we categorized the businesses by those that could best take advantage of Summer Nights as opposed to those who really don't see a direct immediate benefit (other than telling potential customers they are there) from the event.

Those that can take advantage of the event would include retail shops, restaurants, entertainment venues, and bars. Those that wouldn't see an immediate benefit would include financial institutions, professional services, appointment-only businesses, specialty retailers, fitness studios, spas, etc.

Here's what we found:

On Main Street between the Assurant parking lot entrance/exit on Main Street and 6th Street (the proposed area of the street that would be closed) there are 24 street-level businesses. These include three professional services (Wells Fargo Financial Services, First National Bank and Ameriprise Financial), four specialty shops (Stretch Studio, Magic Moments Formal Wear, First Stop Guns, and Mystique Edge Boutique) and 17 retailers and food purveyors. Seventy-one percent of these businesses could benefit from Summer Nights, and there are several upcoming recommendations that can help them do just that.

Along St. Joseph Street between Mt. Rushmore Boulevard and 6th Street there are nine professional services (Ponderosa Screen Printing, Precision Eye Care, Rushmore Professional Building (and its tenants), US Bank, architectural offices, UBS Bank, Edward Jones Investment, Campbell Law firm, Law Offices) and seven specialty retailers (Uniform Center, The Factory, Alex Johnson Hotel, Andrea's Bridal Gallery, a photography studio, Western Stationers, Carol White's Personal Fitness Studio) and 19 retailers and restaurants that could take advantage of Summer Nights (54%).

We also looked at St. Joseph Street between 5th and 6th Streets, and in this case there was only one business (of seven) that could take advantage of Summer Nights, and that was Talley's Silver Spoon Restaurant.

This research demonstrates why there were fewer businesses "for" Summer Nights on St. Joseph Street as compared to those along Main Street. Remember that 71% of businesses along Main Street could take advantage of Summer Nights versus 54% along St. Joseph Streets.

We also looked at the business mix along 7th Street from Main to St. Joseph Street. Here there are two professional services (an engineering firm and a martial arts studio) and two specialty shops (a photography studio and floral shops – both of which could or may have retail opportunities) and five businesses that can benefit from Summer Nights. Perhaps this is why the fewest complaints have come from 7th Street businesses.

We also looked at proximity to parking structures and lots. Nearly two thirds of the parking spots available to host event-goers are north of Main Street as opposed to south of Main Street or along St. Joseph.

Other considerations that had to be addressed included:

- Access for Rapid City Transit down 6th or 7th Streets until 6:00 p.m.
- Access for tour buses bound for Hotel Alex Johnson
- Guests arriving at the hotel with luggage (requiring easy access and convenience)
- One-way traffic along Main and St. Joseph Streets
- Making sure the sound from Summer Nights did not compete with partnering activities at Main Street Square
- Access to and from the Assurant parking area on Main and 7th Streets (employees work until 7:00 pm)
- Access to the drive-through area of First National Bank and the parking lot on the east side of their building

- Pedestrian safety and access between Summer Nights and Main Street Square
- Creating a “family-friendly” zone and activities between Summer Nights and Main Street Square
- Finding the area where the highest concentration of retailers and restaurants that could take advantage of Summer Nights are located
- Access to power and staging areas for the main stage
- Making the event “people friendly”
- Access between downtown and Memorial Park (if it were to be moved there)
- Logistics at Memorial Park
- Benefit or loss due to location change between Memorial Park and downtown
- Possibility of moving it to different locations each week, or month (sharing the pain and gain, as one person put it)

In our research of 30 other cities with similar events occurring weekly where streets are closed, almost every one said the big beneficiaries of the event are restaurants, bars and other food purveyors. Nearly every community surveyed said they get complaints from unhappy retailers. None require the event to ask for permission (get a permit) every year, which never brings the controversy to a close.

For three months we looked at every possible scenario, consulted many other communities with similar events and issues, talked to local stakeholders in Rapid City and ultimately came to one big conclusion: There is no way you will ever find a solution that will make everyone happy. There have been, and continue to be, efforts to try and accomplish that, and it will be impossible to do.

In fact, when asked about moving it to Memorial Park, many retailers commented that they would rather “put up with the event” in front of their shops than simply empty out downtown by moving the 10,000 attendees to another area. The retailers knew they would lose that exposure. Additionally, many attendees come BECAUSE it’s downtown and is a “street dance,” and it IS on pavement and includes the synergy of Main Street Square, restaurants and retailers.

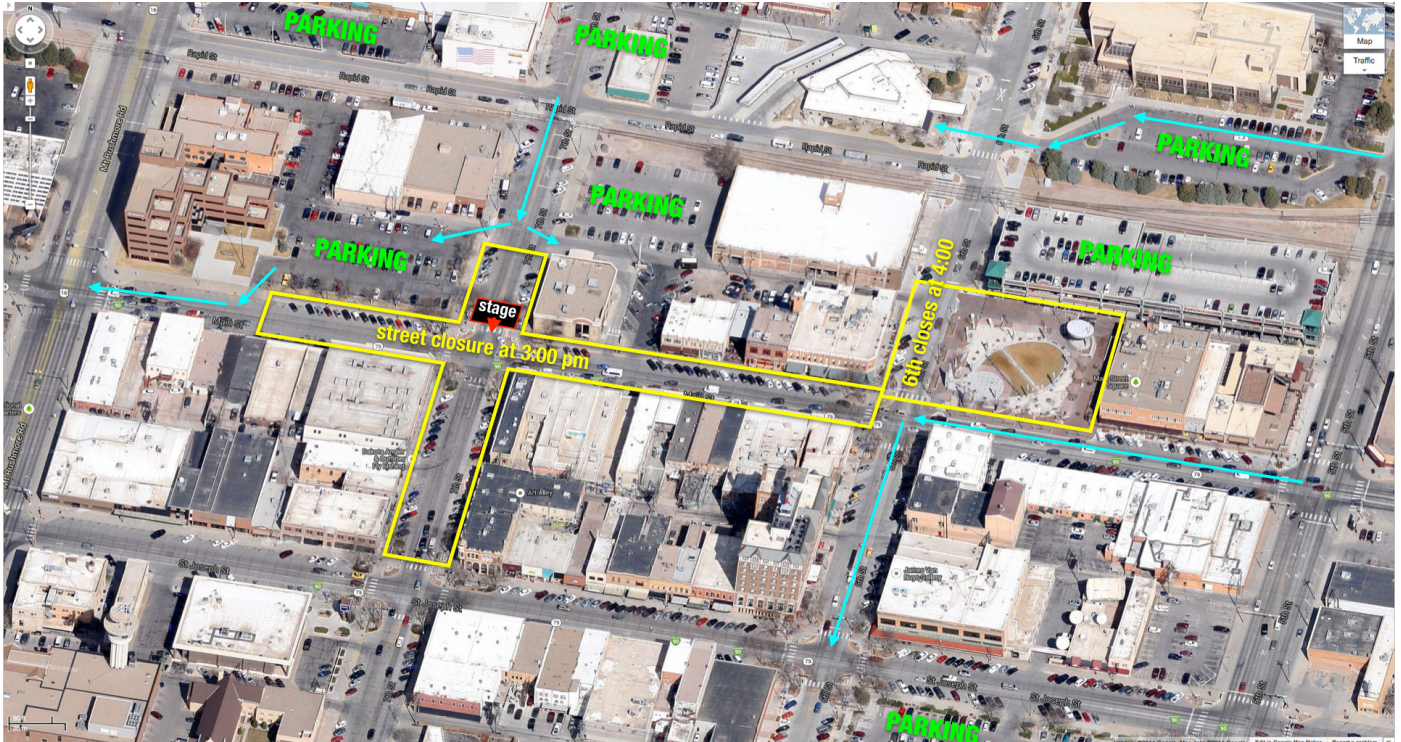
Most downtown businesses support Summer Nights – as long as it’s not in front of their business. Some businesses have said that if it’s moved, the move will actually harm their business. A couple of businesses have said they relocated downtown BECAUSE of Summer Nights. There simply is NO easy answer, and so these recommendations are a series of compromises by Rapid City Transit, Destination Rapid City’s Main Street Square, the city itself, property owners, businesses, and the Summer Nights organization.

RECOMMENDATION #8

The event should take place, and streets closed, on Main Street from the Assurant parking lot access (mid-block between Mt. Rushmore Boulevard and 7th) to the east side of 6th Street – but not down Main to 5th (that block would remain open for parking and traffic), and 7th from just north of Main Street to the north side of St. Joseph Street.

The streets would NOT close until 3:00 p.m. that day.

We examined the benefits and drawbacks of moving the event to Memorial Park, and drawbacks far outweighed the benefits. The biggest obstacle, beside pulling people away from downtown instead of bringing people into downtown, were the logistics of tearing up the lawn areas with that volume of traffic and locating three 24-foot trailers, power requirements, etc. on uneven surfaces.



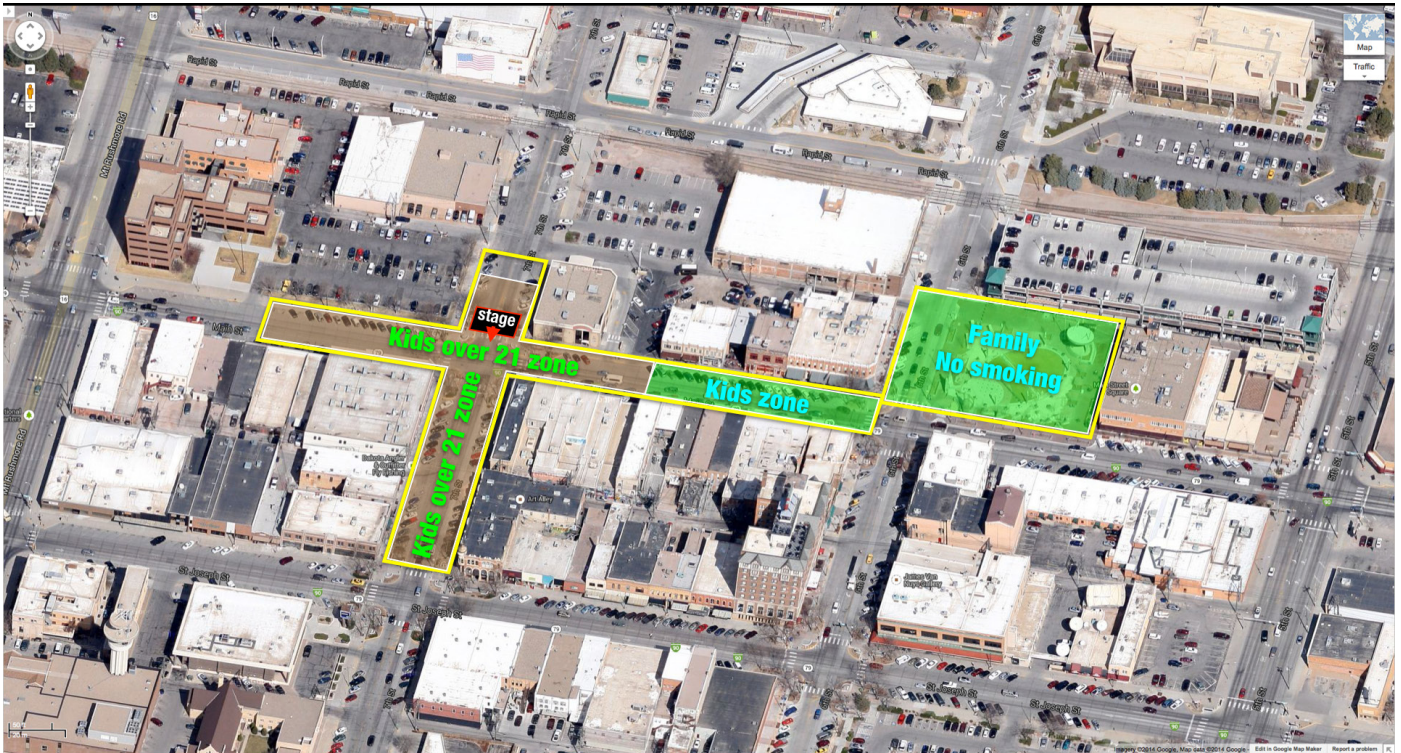
RECOMMENDATION #9

The main stage would be set along Main on 7th next to First National Bank. The front of the stage would be situated even with the Main Street façade of the bank. This leaves room behind the stage for equipment, band staging area, and other logistical needs. The staged area would not extend beyond the “back wall” of First National Bank, keeping access to the rear drive-through window open, as well as access to the parking lot on the east side of the building. Likewise, access from Rapid Street and 7th to the Assurant parking area would remain open.

The stage would face south down 7th Street. It should NOT be placed at an angle, as has been tried previously, as that puts the “audience” to the sides of the stage and directs much of the music towards Main Street Square creating competing volume. The sound, this way, will be channeled down 7th Street where most of the “adult-oriented” areas (beer gardens) and audience will be located.

RECOMMENDATION #10

Main Street Square offers a non-smoking, family-oriented affair to complement Summer Nights. Main Street, mid-block between 7th and 6th Streets, heading east, would be the “transition zone” of kid and family-friendly activities. This way the beer gardens and more adult-oriented activities are primarily down 7th Street and half a block east and west along Main Street. It’s important to note that this does NOT mean kids and families are not allowed throughout the entire event area, but the beer gardens would be situated more along and in front of the main stage area.



RECOMMENDATION #11

Main Street Square will not close off 6th Street between Rapid Street (City Hall) and Main Street until 4:00 pm to allow access for Rapid City Transit. Likewise, between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m., Rapid City Transit, much to their credit, has agreed to route its buses through the City Hall parking area to the transit center. This was a BIG compromise for them, and they should be given much credit for making this sacrifice on behalf of Main Street Square and Summer Nights. Routing buses through the lot is not easy to do.

As a side-note, Main Street Square is actually expanding its offerings for kids and families during Summer Nights, making it an even better event.

RECOMMENDATION #12

The event should not change locations. One idea was to alternate the event from St. Joseph Street to Main Street every other week or every other month to “share the pain and gain” of the event. While this sounds like a great compromise, in application this idea makes it confusing for people. Event goers would have to remember which week the event is held in which location, and that alters where they park, makes it more difficult for Rapid City Transit, makes it difficult for buses and hotel guests arriving or exiting the Alex Johnson, and also makes it difficult to stage the event due to the logistics of power access, etc.

And there are fewer businesses that can take advantage of the event along St. Joseph than along Main and 7th Streets.

RECOMMENDATION #13

Incorporate businesses into the event rather than impose the event on them. Start by placing all vendors down the center of the street, back to back. We Googled Summer Night photos, and where the back of vendor booths were up against the curb, the retailers “behind” the vendor booth were walled off from the public. In fact, they were in the “back alley,” so to speak, and there was virtually no activity for them. Having vendor booths down the center of the street will still provide space for emergency vehicle access down each side. Main Street is a three-lane thoroughfare, and booths would take up no more room than the center lane does. This leaves a “lane” down each side for emergency access.

RECOMMENDATION #14

Along the curbs is where you'd place a three-foot tall fence that helps keep the curb from being a trip hazard, and delineates beer-garden areas. There should be an opening every 20 feet to grant easy access to retailers and restaurants. Once again, the idea is to incorporate them into the event, rather than impose the event on them by restricting exposure and access to their businesses.

RECOMMENDATION #15

At 3:00 when tow-truck drivers arrive to tow vehicles, they would be accompanied by Event Staff (cadets) who will FIRST go into retail shops in front of the vehicle and to each side (no more than three shops) to give customers and workers a "last chance" to move their cars by 3:15. They shouldn't have to go into every business trying to hunt down the owner, but should at least try to give them an opportunity to move their cars. Anyone who gets their car towed, even though they are at fault, will be angry, and if they are customers they will pass that onto the businesses they were frequenting.

RECOMMENDATION #16

Summer Nights should encourage retail businesses to host "sidewalk sales," and the city should allow merchants to use storefront sidewalks, since the streets are closed, to accommodate sales and outdoor merchandising. In other words, the sidewalks in front of the retailers should be used to extend the retail out into the "audience" much like a vendor would. The same would apply to restaurants. For instance, we'd recommend that Firehouse Brewing be allowed to extend outdoor seating and dining areas out over the sidewalk and perhaps even into the street (fenced area of course) so they are PART of the event and not BEHIND the event.

If ANY business in the closed-street areas would like to have a vendor booth or space in the event area, Summer Nights offers this opportunity at no charge. However, every business that's been invited to do so (restaurants and retailers) has turned it down because they are already too busy on these evenings.

The specialty shops, like hair salons, wedding supply shops, and banks, could benefit by having a booth out in the event area. Think of home shows, home and garden shows, job fairs, auto shows, etc. where merchants like this can expose what they have to offer to more than 10,000 local residents who are potential customers. This can work for businesses like the gun shop (no weapons, but other goods could be showcased), architectural firms, exercise studios, spas, formal wear shops, financial services, etc.

Imagine if Edward Jones (not in the event area, but it still could benefit) had a booth there. When it comes to professional or personal services, the key is building up relationships. This is why we refer to professionals as "my barber," "my hair stylist," "my insurance agent," "my doctor," and "my accountant." Having a booth in the event and offering discounts, demonstrations, free advice, can really boost sales for businesses that might otherwise not benefit from the event. Name one other way to get your business in front of 10,000 people at no cost other than the cost of a table, chair, tent and some time.

RECOMMENDATION #17

Provide Summer Nights with a five-year or ten-year permit. In most of the communities we surveyed the event has been going on for ten years or more, and there is no annual request for a permit. This way people simply get used to the fact it's coming.

Think of this: Back in the 1970s when Rapid City decided to make Main Street and St. Joseph Streets one-way streets, there was a big outcry. People were angry about losing half the traffic to the other street. People complained that it would kill their businesses. But, over time, people got used to it, and now it's just the way it is. They work around it.

The same could be said of Main Street Square. Many, many people complained about the cost, the loss of 65 parking spaces (these were not made up by adding the third floor to the parking garage), and complained that it would drain people away

from their retail stores. In fact, the opposite happened. It made downtown an outstanding destination. Two years ago Roger Brooks visited Rapid City as a visitor and went into 14 downtown shops asking them what they thought of Main Street Square. Every one said it was the “best thing Rapid City has ever done.”

The point: By requiring Summer Nights to come before the city every year to secure a permit allows the issues associated with the event fester and grow. It’s time to stop that practice.

In our interviews with other community events, the common thread was that people have “gotten used to” the event being there. In fact, those that don’t benefit simply close a couple hours early that day, and they don’t worry about it. They’ll still get the business on other days instead. Four communities we interviewed have dealt with constant downtown merchant complaints. They stated that this is an ongoing issue that nobody is going to win. However, the benefits and support they receive from the business and residential communities far outweigh the complaints. They just try to communicate and work with the merchants as much as possible.

RECOMMENDATION #18

It’s important to keep competing vendors away from street-front retailers. For instance, putting a food vendor in front of Firehouse Brewing or a Native American jewelry vendor in front of Prairie Edge would not happen. They would be in another area of the event.

Having worked with a thousand communities, we often hear that food trucks and food vendors are direct competition to sit-down restaurants. This is simply not true. If you had a Starbucks downtown or even a McDonald’s, neither of these are competitors to a Firehouse Brewing, Del Monico Grill or Independent Ale House. They are totally different experiences. Those that want to get fast food and walk around eating what they purchased are looking for a different experience than those who want to actually sit down and have a server come to them with a much different menu selection.

Consider this: 10,000 potential customers come downtown during the dinner hours for Summer Nights. If 75% of them (7,500) of them buy their dinner at one of the eight to ten food booths, there are still 2,500 other diners downtown looking for alternative places to eat. During our interviews, most of the people we spoke with stated that during Summer Nights, downtown restaurants typically had a 45-minute to an hour wait to get in. By moving the start time of the event to 6:00 p.m., the restaurants are able to take full advantage of that hour from the time they open for dinner (5:00) and the start of the entertainment.

Restaurants should offer “Early Bird” specials: discounted meals and/or drinks between 4:00 and 6:00 pm. This will help drive traffic into downtown businesses while the event is being staged and set up. They could also provide “Happy Hour” events from 9:00 to 10:00 pm as the band will be done at 9:00 pm. Both of these ideas will really create incentives for people to arrive early and stay later – providing additional revenues to your restaurants and entertainment venues and bringing them in as partners WITH Summer Nights.

RECOMMENDATION #19

After each Summer Nights season, the merchants within the street-closure areas should be surveyed to see how they did, and to ask them what could be done to make the event service them better. This is NOT an invitation to move the event elsewhere, which will naturally be the response for some. By issuing a five or ten-year permit that door will be closed. In one of the communities we interviewed, merchants stated that the event actually saved their business. These surveys could track the benefits to local businesses as well. The surveys should take place in person, but an email survey will work as well. In one city’s case the event helped increase sales at several retailers from 75% to more than 200% the evening of the event every week. Their success and “how they did it” is then shared with others downtown so they too can take advantage of the opportunity.

RECOMMENDATION #20

A hard-copy mailer should be sent to every business in April or early May detailing the logistics and timelines for Summer Nights. This can be done in a single page (or large postcard) with bullet points that detail the recommendations made in this plan. It should be sent to all businesses – not just in the street-closure area, but to all businesses from Mt. Rushmore Boulevard to 5th Street and from Omaha to Kansas Street.

Perhaps this can be a partnership project of the Downtown Association and Destination Rapid City, who both represent the lion's share of retailers, services, and property owners downtown.

RECOMMENDATION #21

When "Event Staff" volunteers or personnel (cadets and others) place the signage on Thursday mornings or begin to set up at 3:00, they should make a point to go INTO the shops, say hello, and ask if there's anything they can do for them. Yes, some may be greeted with sarcasm, but the point is you asked. A key ingredient in every community we interviewed was that there was a constant stream of communication bringing merchants INTO the event instead of IMPOSING it on them.

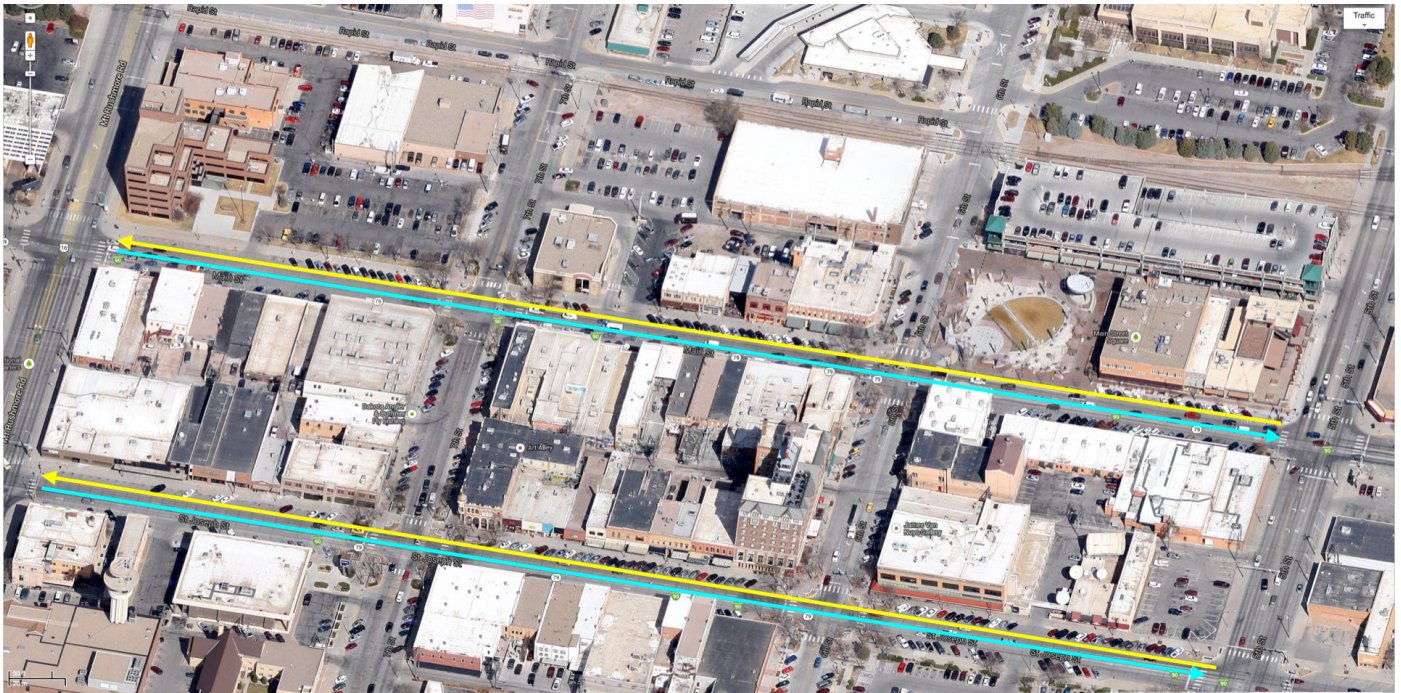
RECOMMENDATION #22

Include FAQ (frequently asked questions) pages on the Summer Nights website, and on the Downtown Association, Destination Rapid City, Main Street Square, and City websites about Summer Nights. Pendleton, Oregon does this, explaining why they close off the streets: "There is a saying in retail that the best place to locate a restaurant is across from another restaurant. The Farmers Market board believes that the best way to get people to shop downtown is to offer attractions downtown, and that the competition between a market that is open approximately 20 nights a year and a retail store that is open 200+ days a year is a non-issue."



RECOMMENDATION #23

Both the Rapid City Downtown Association and Destination Rapid City should include information about how businesses can benefit from having 10,000 potential customers in front of their shops as part of their membership benefits working with downtown retailers. Ideas can include actually having a booth to gain exposure, creating sidewalk sales, offering Summer Nights discounts customers can't get any other time, or creating synergetic events such as a Home Show during Summer Nights where home accent and related retailers would, together, take the middle of the block and put up a concentrated Home Show of goods and services they can sell.



RECOMMENDATION #24

While this recommendation addresses an issue outside the scope of work, we recommend that Rapid City make both Main and St. Joseph Streets two-way streets.

1. Reduce both streets to two lanes. Simply restripe them this year so you have two wide lanes. Then, later as funding becomes available, widen the sidewalks allowing for extended patio dining, bringing retail window displays to exterior spaces, adding benches, planters and beautification.
2. Then restripe the angle-in parking so it fits two-way traffic. Don't worry about redevelopment corner bulb-outs at this point.

The reasons for making this recommendation are many:

1. In the 1970s it was thought that the use of one-way streets and diverting traffic to underdeveloped or struggling streets (perhaps St. Joseph in the case of Rapid City) would jump-start redevelopment. In most cases, this never happened.
2. By doing this there will still be two lanes heading east and two lanes heading west, just one block apart. You only lose that third lane, which is confusing for visitors and makes these two streets primary thoroughfares in an age and an area where you want slower traffic and less of it. For those that want the thoroughfare, that's exactly the purpose of Omaha Street.

3. For visitors, who tend to head down Mt. Rushmore Boulevard, they can't turn left (coming from I-90) onto Main Street and don't know that they can turn on St. Joseph. When they do, there is nothing to tell them how far to go before turning north and then west on Main Street. Many visitors, in this case, simply don't even try to "find" or experience downtown Rapid City.
4. Doing this in 2014 will coincide with the redevelopment of Mt. Rushmore Boulevard. In fact, we recommend that the city do this immediately before it's too late to address it – there needs to be a left-turn lane on Mt. Rushmore at Main Street.
5. This will INCREASE retail and customer traffic along both Main Street and St. Joseph.
6. It will also slow traffic in a time when people want more of a pedestrian experience. As we move to the European Standard, more people want out of their cars. The advantages of wider sidewalks and an intimate downtown setting comes with traffic calming. Who knows, perhaps ten years down the road it will be advantageous to close a street or two to vehicular traffic altogether! NOTE: You ONLY do this when the streets are so busy with pedestrians you really have no choice. Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade is a great example of this. This area, once blighted, is now a major Southern California destination shopping, dining and entertainment district.
7. When it comes to events, like Summer Nights, customers will be able to turn onto Main Street from Mt. Rushmore Boulevard, park, then when they leave they can make a U-turn and head back out to the Boulevard. The same would happen between 5th and 6th Streets along Main. People can head west on Main, park, then when leaving during Summer Nights they can make a U-turn at 6th and head back east to 5th. This change, alone, would alleviate many of the complaints by shops between 5th and 6th and shops like First Stop Guns whose storefront is affected by the closure of both 7th and Main Streets. This would allow customers to come down Main Street and park within about 100 feet of the store's main entrance.

APPENDIX

1. Research communities, populations, website links, type of event
2. Spreadsheet detailing surveyed communities with specifics including city, population, type of event, operating days, weeks open, hours, street closure times.
3. Summer Nights survey facilitated by the Rapid City Downtown Association. This was not a formal survey and many members did not respond to the survey, but does provide some insight from members.
4. Forum for Summer Nights (March 2012) comments
5. Street-level business inventory by block

1. The other cities that host weekly events requiring the closure of streets included:

1. Pendleton, Oregon (pop. 16,838)
 - a. Pendleton Farmers Market
 - b. http://www.pendletonfarmersmarket.net/About_The_Market.htm
2. San Luis Obispo, California (pop. 45,878)
 - a. San Luis Obispo's Thursday Night Farmers Market
 - b. <http://visitslo.com/cm/Activities/Farmers%20Market.html>
3. Poway, California (pop. 49,071)
 - a. Poway Farmers Market on Midland Road
 - b. <http://www.poway.org/index.aspx?page=540>

4. Redlands, California (pop. 69,916)
 - a. Market Night
 - b. <http://www.cityofredlands.org/Market%20Night>
5. Dubuque, Iowa (pop. 58,155)
 - a. Dubuque Farmers Market
 - b. <http://www.dubuquemainstreet.org/fm.html>
6. Huntington Beach, California (pop. 194,708)
 - a. Huntington Beach Surf City Nights
 - b. <http://www.huntingtonbeachevents.com/Event/surf-city-nights.html>
7. Des Moines, Iowa (pop. 206,688)
 - a. Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market
 - b. <http://desmoinesfarmersmarket.com/general-info/>
8. Yakima, Washington (93,101)
 - a. Downtown Summer Nights in Yakima
 - b. <http://downtownsummernights.com/>
9. Louisville, Colorado (pop. 19,074)
 - a. Louisville Downtown Street Faire
 - b. <http://www.downtownlouisvilleco.com/street-faire/>
10. Sunnyvale, California (pop. 146,197)
 - a. Downtown Summer Music Series
 - b. <http://sunnyvaledowntown.com/summer-series.html>
11. Saline, Michigan (pop. 8,976)
 - a. Saline Main Street Summer Music Series
 - b. <http://www.salinemainstreet.org/events/summer-music-series/>
12. Holland, Michigan (33,279)
 - a. Downtown Holland Street Performers Series
 - b. <http://www.cityofholland.com/downtownservices/street-performer-series-0>
13. Bozeman, Montana (pop. 36,695)
 - a. Downtown Bozeman – Music on Main
 - b. <http://www.downtownbozeman.org/musiconmain.html>
14. Longmont, CO – (pop. 88,690)
 - a. Downtown Longmont, CO – Summer Concert Series
 - b. <http://www.downtownlongmont.com/arts-and-entertainment/downtown-events/downtown-summer-concert-series>
15. Mountain View, California (pop. 74,066)
 - a. Downtown Mountain View, CA
 - b. http://www.mountainview.gov/city_hall/comm_services/recreation_programs_and_services/community_events/summer_concert_series.asp

16. North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (pop. 13,752)
 - a. North Myrtle Beach Music on Main Concert Series
 - b. <http://parks.nmb.us/Page.aspx?id=11>
17. Portland, Oregon (pop. 603,106)
 - a. Portland Music on Main
 - b. <http://oregonmusicnews.com/2013/05/17/music-on-main-streets-2013-lineup/>
18. Hendersonville, North Carolina (pop. 13,288)
 - a. Downtown Hendersonville Music on Main Street
 - b. http://www.historichendersonville.org/music_on_main.htm
19. Columbiana, Alabama (pop. 4,197)
 - a. Downtown Columbiana, AL Music on Main
 - b. http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2013/06/columbianas_music_on_main_stre.html
20. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (pop. 75,103)
 - a. Downtown Bethlehem Music on Main
 - b. <http://www.downtownbethlehemassociation.com/calendar/music-on-main>
21. Palm Springs, California (pop. 44,552)
 - a. Palm Springs Village Fest
 - b. <http://villagefest.org/>
22. Chico, California (pop. 87,714)
 - a. Downtown Chico – Thursday Night Market
 - b. <http://www.downtownchico.net/events/dcbaevents/tnm>
23. Downers Grove, Illinois (pop. 49,399)
 - a. Downtown Downers Grove, IL – Summer Nights Classic Car Show
 - b. <http://www.downtowndg.org/sites/www.downtowndg.org/files/assets/CarShowSchedule2014.pdf>
24. El Cajon, California (pop. 101,435)
 - a. Cajon Classic Cruise
 - b. <http://www.ci.el-cajon.ca.us/events/Cajon%20Classic%20CAR%20SHOW%20calendar.pdf>
25. Kingsport, Tennessee (pop. 51,501)
 - a. Twilight Alive Summer Concert Series
 - b. [Visitkingsport.com/concert-series.html](http://visitkingsport.com/concert-series.html)
26. Billings, Montana (pop. 106,954)
 - a. Downtown Billings, MT – Alive at Five
 - b. <http://www.billings365.com/2013/05/07/2013-alive-after-5-line-up-is-announced/>
27. Waukesha, Wisconsin (pop. 70,920)
 - a. Friday Night Live
 - b. <http://www.waukeshafreemanfridaynightlive.com/>
 - c. NOTE: Check this one out. Similar population to Rapid City and a community that said the event actually saved a number of downtown businesses.

28. Santa Barbara, California (pop. 89,639)
 - a. Farmers Market
29. Santa Monica, California (pop. 91,812)
 - a. Farmers Market
30. Oxnard, California (pop. 201,555)
 - a. Farmers Market

2.

Huntington Beach	CA	194,708	Street Fair	Tuesday	Year round	5pm-9pm	1:30pm-2pm
Louisville	CO	19,074	Street Faire	Friday	9 weeks, Summer	5pm-10pm	2:30pm
North Myrtle Beach	SC	13,752	Concert Series	Thursday	19 weeks, May to September.	7pm-9pm	2:30pm
Sunnyvale	CA	146,197	Concert Series	Wednesday	11 weeks, June to August	5:30pm-8:30pm	2pm
Downers Grove	IL	49,399	Car Show	Friday	11 weeks, June to August.	5pm-9pm	3:30pm
Bilings	MT	106,954	Concert Series	Thursday	13 weeks, May to August.	5pm-8pm	3pm
Pendleton	OR	16,838	Farmers Market	Friday	20-24 weeks, From May to Oct	4pm-7pm	3pm-3:30pm
Bozeman	MT	36,695	Music on Main	Thursday	8 weeks, June to August	6:30pm-8pm	4:30pm close of side streets, 5pm close of main street
Longmont	CO	88,690	Concert Series	Friday	8-9 weeks, End of June to August.	6pm-9pm	4pm
San Luis Obispo	CA	45,878	Farmers Market	Thursday	Year round	6pm-9pm	5:30pm
Saline	MI	8,976	Concert Series	Thursday	11 weeks, June to August	7pm-9pm	5:30pm
Hendersonville	NC	13,288	Concert Series	Friday	9 weeks, June to August	7-9pm	5:30pm
Redlands	CA	69,916	Market Night	Thursday	Year round	6pm-9pm	5pm
Chico	CA	87,714	Street Market	Thursday	April-September	6pm-9pm	5pm
Poway	CA	49,071	Farmers Market	Saturday	Year round	8am-1pm	6am-2pm
Palm Springs	CA	44,552	Village Fest	Thursday	Year round	7pm-10pm	Side streets at 4:30pm, Main street at 5pm.
Dubuque	IA	58,155	Farmers Market	Saturday	May-Oct	7am-12pm	
Des Moines	IA	206,688	Farmers Market	Saturday	May-Oct	7am-12pm	
Yakima	WA	93,101	Concert Series	Thursday	11 weeks, From June to August	5pm-9pm	
Holland	MI	33,279	Street Performer series	Thursday	Summer	6:30pm-8:30pm	
Mountain View	CA	74,066	Concert Series	Thursday	5 weeks, July and August.	6:30pm-8pm	
Portland	OR	603,106	Concert Series	Wednesday	8 weeks, July and August.	5pm-7pm	
Columbiana	AL	4,197	Concert Series	Friday	9 weeks, June to August.	7-9pm	
Bethlehem	PA	75,103	Concert Series	Friday	9 weeks, June to August.	5:30pm-7:30pm	
El Cajon	CA	101,435	Car Show	Wednesday	23 weeks, Apr-Sept	5pm-8pm	
Kingsport	TN	51,501	Concert Series	Thursday and Friday	Mid May to September	7pm-9pm	
Waukegan	WI	70,920	Street Fair	Friday	June to October	6:30pm-9pm	
Santa Barbara	CA	89,639	Farmers Market	Saturday	All Summer	8:30am-1pm	
Santa Monica	CA	91,812	Farmers Market	Wednesday and Saturday	Year round	8:30am-1:30pm	
Oxnard	CA	201,555	Farmers Market	Thursday	Year round	9am-1pm	

3. Summer Nights Survey of member businesses along St. Joseph and Main Streets

Summer Nights Survey 2013

(500's on St. Joe and 500's on Main)

Yes – 11

No – 1

- It's good to make people aware of downtown businesses, including hers but SN does not bring in customers, so SN is good for downtown. Yes SN should continue but need to solve the teen problem. She said police don't like SN because they end up babysitting the teens dropped by parents: She thinks there needs to be an activity for the teens and maybe the churches could come up with something
- There is no benefit of SN to their business and she does stay open during it only because she has a sewing group that night. Yes SN should continue. It's fun and good for RC.
- Not really any benefit to them when the site is far away but. Not opposed to SN, except they wish the street would be opened back up earlier.
- Summer Nights does not promote their business, but has no problem with continuing it.
- It depends on where the vendors who give out food are located as to whether it cuts into their business that night, but he thinks summer nights should continue.
- Yes it is good for business and yes it should continue. Young people were a big problem the first year and not so much last year, but they are a problem mostly for other types of businesses. Concerned about how the parking on the ramp is managed.
- Summer Nights is not a problem. They support it. It's good for RC, loves the downtown atmosphere, it is okay where it is, doesn't impact their business too much as most folks are looking for food.
- The first year of expansion to additional space brought the problem of minor kids in the big groups and were really a problem. Last summer the store restricted entry to small groups of 4-5, which saved them, so last year was not bad.
- It is a real problem to have kids in large groups come through, so last year the store closed at 5. The kids were really destructive and shoplifted heavily, scared off regular customers. The building hired security service, but they still had problems so now close early. They are not opposed to summer nights, any exposure is good, but they will continue to close early. The police were very helpful to them also.
- Yes SN has been good for business. Yes it should continue. They were amazed how fast the area is cleaned up considering the mess left. No complaints.
- Huge supporter of Summer Nights. I really don't think it can be measured whether it is "good" for business. We usually don't see huge sales the night of....but we are ok with that! This is a community event that gets people off their couch and outside with their families!!! We get hundreds of people past our door and in our store who may never have known about us and who knows how many come back at other times. For all the businesses that don't like it (and I do realize there are quite a few and have spoken with them), a business couldn't ask for better advertising for FREE. If they have to hire on more staff those nights or ask family members to help, do that. You can't expect to have hundreds more people through your shop and not have some theft. I like to say, "in this business, that's the price of poker!" I have heard other businesses say most people who come out are not their customer "type." Well I say be a better business person and come up with something that makes them your "type." Sorry for the rant, but I just wonder would they prefer a dead Thursday and no possibility for new customers? It makes no difference for us where they hold the event. When our store was down the block we were in the thick of it and that was fun. Our new location is great also.
- Yes, Summer Nights is good for business. Yes, it should continue on St. Joseph Street. It proved to be good exposure.

(6th Street & 7th Street)

Yes – 9

No - 7

- Of the no's though 3 of them said they do think it is great for downtown even though it is not good for their specific business and would not like seeing it moved.
- 3 businesses did mention they would like to see something for the teenagers because right now they do not have really anything for them since they are too old for the kid's section and too young for the beer garden.
 - No, not with the early street closings. With the growth of the event and all the improvements to Memorial Park that may be a better location. The stage and additional parking is already there. Moving it there could maybe help with the teen problem on 6th and Art Ally.

(600's & 700's on Main Street)

Yes - 6

No - 5

- NO, they close the store. At first it was ok when they were on 7th, but the last couple of years they close.
- Yes, they like Summer Nights, but it does not help their business on that night. Lots of shoplifters. They have to have 4 people working each Thursday because of the kids. No Sales. When it was on Main, the music was very loud. Now that it has moved to St. Joe, the traffic flow is much smoother.
- NO, this event needs to move to another venue.
- We are not Effectuated
- Yes, love it!
- No, move it to Kansas City Street. He does not like that there are food vendors competing with our local businesses.
- Yes, they like it. Would like to have it back on Main St.
- Yes, they like it. They think it's good for the Downtown. But No sales the night of the event.
- Yes, they like it. Glad it moved to St. Joe Yes, it is good for business
- No, it is not good for business, no longer family oriented. Will not allow her children to come downtown any longer during the event. Too much "rif-raf".
- Yes, they like it. But, they close their office at 4:30p
- No, it has not been good for business, No it should not continue on Main Street or St. Joseph Street.

(600 block of St. Joseph St.)

Yes - 2

No - 5

Mixed Blessing- 1

- No, it has not been good for business. No it should not continue on Main St. or St. Joseph
- Yes, it has been good for business. Yes, it should stay on Main St. or St. Joseph
- Yes, it has been good for business. Yes, it should stay on St. or St. Joseph. It is very good for our business. We get comments all the time "I did not know you were located here."
- No, it has not been good for business. There nerve racking misconception is that bringing people downtown for Summer Nights equates to shoppers who are looking for medical uniforms and women's comfort shoes. We consider ourselves to be more of a destination location and closing off access to our store has had a serious impact on our business. Earlier this year I ran some reports that I shared with City Council, comparing our invoice counts in the month of May/June. On Thursdays between the hours of 1:00pm and 7:00pm, we saw an average decrease of 50% in our invoice counts. Shutting down the parking and streets starting at 1pm eliminates access for our established customers, and as the afternoon progresses, things get worse. Though Summer Nights has been bad for business, I feel fortunate that I haven't had shoplifting and vandalism issues like many of my neighbors.
- Mixed Blessing - Some nights during Summer Nights we made money, others...not so much. I love the concept of Summer Nights, but I think it has outgrown Downtown. And the street closures are a hassle and have a negative impact on my business. Downtown events that do not close down streets are great for my business. Summer Nights does bring a lot of people downtown, but they are not there to shop. And my customers who DO shop are unable to get to my store. I think across Omaha in the park would be a great location for Summer Nights. Plenty of room, good parking close by, and still close to downtown. While it's true that I have gained some new customers after they visited my store during Summer Nights, they have not offset the decline in revenue I have experienced due to closed streets and increased shoplifting during the event.
- No, we close early on Thursdays due to the event. I believe it should be moved to side streets closer to the square. Therefore businesses on Main .. and St. Joe can still have parking for customers and fun can be had by all @ the "Square".
- No, Summer Nights has not been good for my business. We are not "opposed" to Summer Nights continuing at the current location. We would, however, support moving it (perhaps between Main and Omaha). If it stays though, we're ok with it.
- No, Summer Nights has been damaging to our business since the 2013 move to close off St. Joseph St. After the experience of two or three Summer Nights evenings being open this past summer, we closed up shop on Thursdays at 2:30- 3:00pm. It simply wasn't worth being open to play host to people looking for a bathroom or taking a break from the sun or the bandstand's amplified sound who were not actual prospective customers. In prior years, Summer Nights has certainly been a plus for the downtown and we have strongly supported it, but is has grown to such an extent that for both business and parking reasons it is our opinion that it should be relocated to an appropriate downtown venue with adequate space and parking such as the Civic Center Park. For the reasons above, we would support moving Summer Nights to a more appropriate venue and reopening downtown's streets on Thursday nights.

4. Forum comments and other local research notes

From a meeting held March 28, 2012 - a Forum for Summer Nights and Downtown Businesses (led by Malcom Chapman, a former city council member):

Responses from forum attendees - "What's good about Summer Nights?"

- It's a gathering place
- Has good music
- It's free
- Encourages family time
- It's for all ages

- It's friend oriented
- Creates a sense of community
- It's supportive of local charities
- Enhances volunteerism
- Establishes another tie to EAFB (I don't what EAFB is)
- Showcases businesses
- Has a variety of entertainment
- Creates business opportunities
- Aids tourism
- Adds to job market
- Is a positive event for Rapid City
- Is about downtown revitalization
- Increases revenue
- Is a quality event
- Is another great idea from a Leadership Rapid City class
- Highlights our public safety officials
- It's fun

At the same meeting, here are responses to the question: "What are your concerns?"

- Parking
- Closing Main Street so early on Thursdays
- How to expand vendor participation
- Set up of the event
- Communication with businesses (As one attendee states, "No one asked me.")
- ID policy as it relates to wristbands

Transportation (Potential use of trolleys and/or other methods to transfer people to and from designated areas.)

- More things for teens and seniors to do
- Art Alley as a "hang out" for youth
- A need for more tables/seating areas
- Over-emphasis of alcohol

In post-forum discussions with City Council members, City officials, downtown business owners and employees, Summer Nights Executive Board members, and several folks who just like downtown Rapid City, all seem to agree that Summer Nights is an event that is worthy of the discussion that it has generated, and that stakeholders should make every effort to continue to improve it.

Recommendations from the forum and post-forum discussions:

Collectively: Form an Advisory Committee from the stakeholders group and address the issues above.

Advisory Committee: Explore other footprint options for the overall event and present recommendations to Summer Nights Executive Committee and examine the relationship with and potential use of Main Street Square during Summer Nights.

City of Rapid City: Consider an Ordinance allowing downtown businesses to extend their businesses to the sidewalks during special downtown events like Summer Nights. (Note: I think this sounds like a good idea.)

Summer Nights Executive Committee: Create a succession plan for the leadership of the event to ensure its sustainability.

From an article in the Kayla Gahagan Journal dated June 6, 2013:

"Summer Nights was so crowded in 2012 that they had to expand their venues by 30% for 2013, moving back to its original location on Seventh and St. Joseph streets, plus a second stage featuring live bands will be offered at Main Street Square.

"This configuration is meant to allow for bigger crowds and should reduce traffic flow problems downtown.

"Every year the event grows. The organizers try to make it inexpensive and family oriented, with a kids area with golfing, train rides, clowns and jumping castles (?). The beer garden is its largest revenue stream."

From an article in the Rapid City Journal dated June 20, 2013:

With crowds of between 10,000 and 14,000 people on the first two Summer Nights (of 2013), Rapid City police made modifications to traffic and pedestrian traffic patterns.

People walk back and forth between the venue on Seventh and St. Joseph streets and Main Street Square, causing traffic jams. Police stopped allowing left-hand turns onto Sixth Street, and closed Sixth Street from Art Alley to Main Street. Businesses in the area were consulted about closing that portion of Sixth Street. Officers remained stationed at the congested intersection to help with traffic control.

Summer Nights organizers are holding off until 2:30 p.m. to clear cars from Seventh Street between Main and St. Joseph streets and on St. Joseph between Seventh and Main Streets.

Signs are posted at each parking spot, reminding downtown visitors to move their vehicles by 2:30 p.m.

"Summer Nights is trying to help the businesses by using the signs," Allender said. "It's a good experiment to try to keep parking open longer."

After reading a lot of comments on the internet about Summer Nights, I, personally, think it sounds like an AWESOME event that every town should emulate. My gosh! It seems incredible. It seems there are a few bumps that need smoothing out, but that on a whole, the event is great for the community. I saw a comment by one business owner who said his business STOPS on Thursday afternoons, but then I also saw other comments from business owners who didn't say anything negative about it.

Also, from what I've read, one of the big reasons to start this event back in 2008 was to help revitalize downtown by giving people a reason to come and spend time there. That sure has worked. Fine-tuning some things to make sure businesses can still get customers in their doors could be worked out, I'm sure. I remember hearing that businesses in downtown Olympia saw a marked decrease in customers during Lakefair, so that could be an issue with events in general. Although, once you draw people downtown, they see what business are available, and they may come back another time after the festival. Whereas if they hadn't come downtown for the festival at all, they wouldn't even know the business was there. I think the event would encourage people to feel a sense of enjoyment of downtown, a sense of fun and familiarity, a sense of community, which would make them want to come back downtown for other reasons too, after the event.

I've printed out some of the articles from the internet, and I'll save them in case you would find them helpful.

5. Rapid City business inventory by block

Rapid City Main Street

36 businesses

- 3 professional services (bank, financial services)
- 6 restaurants & entertainment venues
- 18 retailers
- 4 specialty shops (fitness, guns, wigs, mattresses)

Businesses between 5th and 6th Streets

- Solas Salon
- Rapid City Journal
- Que Pasa Restaurant (sp)
- Mitzy's Books
- Roamin' Around (outfitter)
- Wig Boutique
- Sealy Mattress store
- Zoom's Soda and Candy
- The Shirt Shack
- Covenant Creations Salon
- Bottecelli's Restaurant
- Karma Boutique (womens clothing)

Businesses between 6th and 7th Streets

- Prairie Edge
- Jewelry store
- Dakota Drum Company
- Reflections of South Dakota Gallery and Gifts
- Shangri La Boutique (womens clothing)
- Del Monico Grill
- Stretch Studio (fitness center?)
- Firehouse Brewing Company
- Magic Moments Formal Wear
- Mona Lisa's on Main (womens or second hand store)
- Paris Chic (womens fashions)
- Edge (sports shop/outfitter)
- Jewelry and repair shop
- Wells Fargo Financial Services
- First National Bank
- Global Market
- Dark Canyon Sports (sp)
- Presidents Information Center

Businesses between 7th and the Assurant parking exit/entrance

- Gun shop
- Mystique Edge Boutique (spa)
- Ameriprise Financial
- Oasis Lounge
- The Hobby House
- Creative Art & Frame

On 7th Street between Main and St. Joseph Street

- Tandy Leather
- Dakota Angler (outfitter)
- Engineer firm (or professional office)
- Floral shop
- Tinder Box
- Marshall arts
- Levinson wine & cigars
- Untamed Accessories
- Photography studio

On St. Joseph from 7th to 6th

- The Clock Shop
- The Brass Rail
- Midwest Merchantile
- ? Studio & Gallery (jewelry store)
- Olive oil company
- Independent Ale House
- Ponderosa Screen Printing
- Michael's Menswear
- Johnson Creek Antiques
- Landstrom's Jewelry
- Sole Mate Shoes
- Uniform Center
- The Factory? (Salon?)
- Antiques Mall
- Dakota Coin and Precious Metals
- Bella (women's clothing and accessories)
- Museum of the American Bison
- Again Books & Bazaar (used books)
- AJ's Wicked Salon and Spa
- Alex Johnson Merchantile
- Alex Johnson Hotel
- Precision Eye Care
- Andrea's Bridal Gallery

On St. Joseph from 6th to 5th

- Talley's Silver Spoon
- Best Little Hair House
- Christian Science Reading Room
- Quilt Connection/fabric store
- KOYA Television
- Rimrock Exchange
- Office or another building (no signage)

On St. Joseph between Mt. Rushmore and 7th

- Rushmore Professional Building
- US Bank
- Architectural offices
- UBS – bank
- Photography studio
- Working artists & gallery
- Edward Jones Investment
- Western Stationers
- Carol White's Personal Fitness Studio
- Mustard Seed Catholic Book Store
- Campbell Law Firm
- Law offices



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