



SUPPORTING BUSINESS STARTUPS



ABOUT THE SOLUTION CENTER

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

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

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



ABOUT THE CREATORS

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

Jay Schlinsog, CMSM is the owner of Downtown Professionals Network (DPN), a Franklin, TN-based firm specializing in innovative, market-driven downtown and business district revitalization and economic development solutions. He brings more than thirty years of experience gained while serving as chief executive with chamber and district management organizations, and through his work with communities and organizations across the United States.

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

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SUPPORTING BUSINESS STARTUPS



Historic downtown and neighborhood business districts are, in many ways, natural breeding grounds for entrepreneurs and startup businesses. The district's local character, the unique nature of its buildings and spaces, comparatively lower overhead costs, convenient live-work options, surrounding businesses and attractions, and the chance to be part of a revitalization movement or to get ahead of "the boom" are just some features found attractive by many pursuing their own dreams.

Predictably, individuals will get in touch or even show up unannounced at your door. Each contact – or prospect – should be embraced as a chance for your organization to play an important role in the prospect's pursuit of their dream, and to advance goals for an economically vibrant and diverse downtown.



The Tools to Launch

Packaging quality tools and materials with supporting activities targeted to meet entrepreneurs and business startup candidates where they are in the development process will enhance prospects for success. Examples of tools and materials to include as part of your business startup package include the following:

Available Properties	
 236 N. Main Street 4,599 SQ FT Commercial Vacant	Owner - Bill Wallace 386-329-8506 Rent/For Sale
 111 N. Main Street 5,346 SQ FT Commercial Asking Price: \$150,000 Vacant	Owner - Ralph & Diane Carlson 231-920-3149 For Sale by Owner
 102 N. Main Street 2,002 SQ FT Commercial	Agent - Ashlee Flachs 231-220-9995 Dreams Realty Listing Price: \$245,000
 120 N. Main Street 2,112 SQ FT Commercial	Agent - Heather Valdez 984-422-0642 Real Estate One Listing Price: \$150,000
 201 W. 7th Street 1,640 SQ FT Commercial Vacant	Agent - Ashlee Flachs 231-220-9995 Dreams Realty Listing Price: \$49,000

List of Available Properties and Spaces

Maintain a current list of district properties and spaces available for sale or lease on your website, and in a print-on-demand format. Be sure to include basic property and owner or agent contact information.

Business Resources Guide

Charles City offers a variety of community development building assistance options, depending on the projects and individual program, funding criteria.

Through Main Street Charles City

RECORD ASSISTANCE
Certain city records located in the Charles City Public Works Department are eligible for digital preservation or on-line through your local area and the local government and business communities. Contact the City Clerk for more information.

PLAZA IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM
Funds received can be used for landscaping, or improving the overall appearance of commercial property within the Main Street District. The grant will be in the form of a stipend. The Main Street District and the Charles City Public Works Department will provide the grant and the contractor will be responsible for the work. The grant is available for a maximum of \$10,000.

LANDMARK & HISTORIC PRESERVATION GRANT PROGRAM
Funds received can be used for the restoration of historic properties. The grant is available for a maximum of \$10,000. The grant is available for a maximum of \$10,000.

REVENUE GRANTING
Main Street Charles City and Charles City Public Works offer a revenue grant program. Grants must be physically located within the City limits of Charles City. Projects can include assistance and professional services, such as: research, and site plan, construction, renovation, alterations, repairs or replacement of building structural systems, utility systems, and other systems. Grants are available for a maximum of \$10,000. The grant is available for a maximum of \$10,000.

MAIN STREET ECON CHALLENGER GRANT
Economic development grants are available for funding from the State, and only available to Main Street business communities. Eligible projects must be within the identified Main Street project area. This program requires a detailed business plan, business plan, and a business plan.

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LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
A variety of resources are available for businesses and individuals. Funding is available from Main Street Charles City, and the Charles City Area Chamber of Commerce Office, located at 401 North Main St. This resource is available for a maximum of \$10,000. The grant is available for a maximum of \$10,000.

Other local and state programs may be available for your project. For more information and other program details, contact Community Development Director Mark Wink at 641.238.2381 or mark@mainstreetcharlescity.com.

Business Resources List or Guide

Maintain a current list of business resources (e.g. technical assistance, funding options, incentives, etc.) applicable to startup and expanding businesses in your district. Be sure to include resources available from local, regional, state and federal sources, along with summary descriptions and contact information to learn more.

HOW TO START A BUSINESS IN Downtown Anniston

BUSINESS LICENSE
Required to start a new business in Anniston and must be renewed every January. The license fee is determined by the type of business and business classification. Contact the City of Anniston Finance staff for assistance in determining your business license classification before applying for a business license.
256-231-7716 or 256-231-7725

ZONING VERIFICATION
When starting a business, it is important to verify if an area is zoned for the type of business that you would like to start. To determine this, request a zoning verification letter by e-mailing the following information to planning@anniston.gov: property address, property owner, tentative name of development, your name, your address, your company, and your number. Once zoning has been verified, you will receive a verification letter via email within one business day. Please contact Planning Secretary Jamie Emmons with any questions.
256-231-7720

BUILDING PERMITS
Required from the Building and Safety Division to ensure federal life safety standards. Building Permits cover everything from minor building improvements to new developments. If you are thinking of making any changes to your building or property, please contact the Building and Safety Division before doing any work or purchasing materials.
256-231-7724 or 256-231-7727

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
The Engineering Department will need to be contacted if the scope of a project includes land disturbance or any changes to sidewalks, parking lots, or streets.
256-231-7750

FIRE MARSHAL
The Fire Marshal's Office works with the Building and Safety Division to review plans for changes of use or for larger scope projects. All work on a fire protection system, except annual tests, requires a permit. Fire protection work includes sprinkler systems, alarm systems, and commercial kitchen hoods.
256-231-7950

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
The Anniston Historic Preservation Commission (AHPC) is responsible for preserving the charm and property values within Anniston's historic districts. Any applicant who wishes to improve the exterior of any building or structure within a historic district must submit a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval before work can begin. Contact the Planning and Development Department before beginning any work for guidance on the Certificate of Appropriateness process.
256-231-7720

MAIN STREET ANNISTON

Starting a Business Guide

One approach to a business startup guide embraces a “keep it simple” mantra, like the infographics format used by Anniston, AL. While simplistic, the concise and illustrative nature of infographics can be highly effective in accomplishing four important things:

1. Capturing the attention of entrepreneurs and business startup prospects
2. Conveying a welcoming, supportive, and business-friendly environment
3. Outlining or mapping key steps in a concise manner
4. Directing prospects to local resources for more information and help

The minimalist approach may be most appropriate for small communities and for organizations with a designated point person able to guide and work closely with prospects through the various steps. Infographics can also be a great way to summarize or map key steps or content contained in more detailed versions of business startup guides. Visit the additional resources section for more examples of business guides.



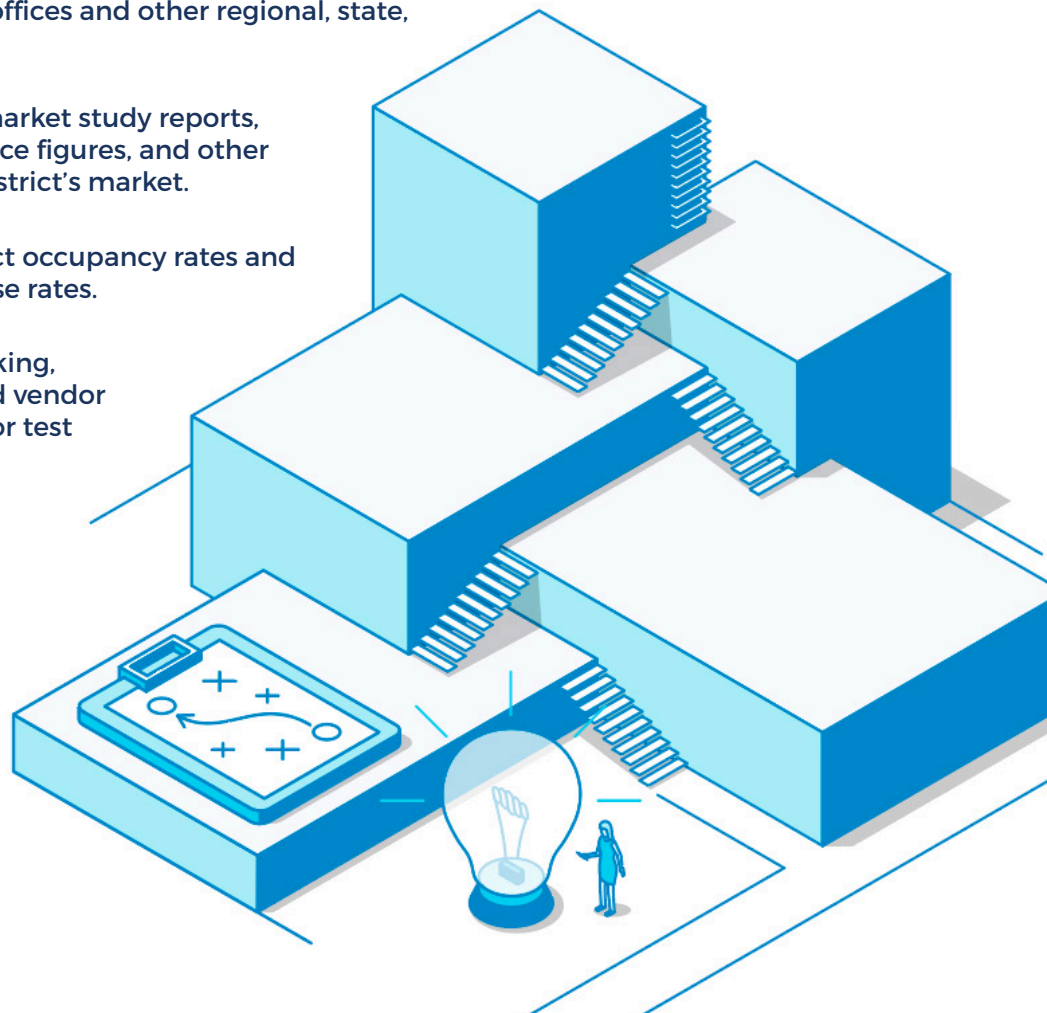
Meeting Businesses Where They Are

A practical approach to seizing on these opportunities might organize, package, and target business startup activities, tools, and resources in ways that meet entrepreneurs and aspiring business owners where they are in the business development process, described and outlined here with ideas and examples grouped in Launch Pad, Pre-launch, and Launch phases.

LAUNCH PAD

Prospects may be in the idea phase, the early stages of developing a concept, or taking initial steps in the startup process, like working on a business plan, test marketing the concept, exploring funding options, or conducting an initial search of potential locations for their new venture. Support activities should emphasize access and referrals to technical assistance, resources, and tools valuable to this critical planning and experimental stage. Examples include:

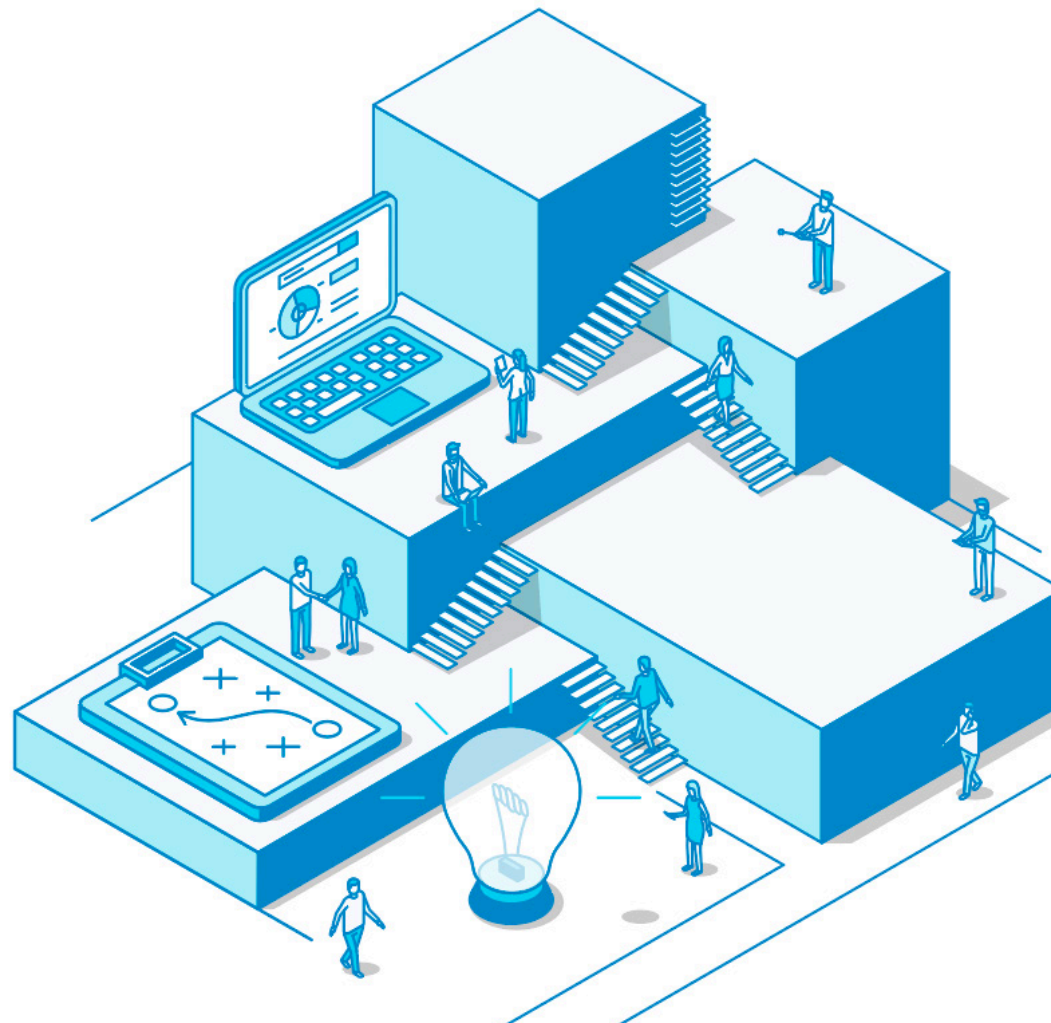
- Spending time one-on-one to learn more about each prospect and their concept or business, timeline, needs, and ways your organization can help. Part of these early discussions should serve to determine whether the proposed use is a good fit for, or even allowed within, the district.
- Introducing the prospect to appropriate local government officials, area economic development partner organizations, and technical assistance providers based on identified planning and resource needs.
- Promoting and directing prospects to online business startup resources, like the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) *Business Guide* (<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide>) and the *Startup Roadmap* (<https://www.score.org/startup-roadmap>) from Service Core of Retired Executives, along with similar online sites maintained by state Small Business Development Center (SBDC) offices and other regional, state, and federal organizations.
- Sharing demographic data, market study reports, survey results, event attendance figures, and other information describing the district's market.
- Sharing information on district occupancy rates and uses, property values, and lease rates.
- Identifying incubator, co-working, outlet, pop-up, or event-based vendor opportunities to experiment or test market concepts.



PRE-LAUNCH

Prospects working through the pre-launch phase may be finalizing their business plan, have applied for or secured startup funding or tentative commitments, and are actively looking at potential locations for their startup venture. Others working through the pre-launch phase could include home-based entrepreneurs, incubator tenants, event vendors, and existing businesses moving to the district. The focus of support activities may revolve around information and assistance in finding an appropriate location and navigating the local business startup process. Examples include:

- ❑ Providing a list of available properties and spaces that includes basic property and contact information.
- ❑ Providing user-friendly materials outlining and guiding prospects through the business startup process (e.g., inspections, permitting, licensing, utilities, etc.) and making referrals or introductions to appropriate officials.
- ❑ Sharing information on relevant technical assistance, incentives, and programs (e.g. design assistance, sign grants, pitch contests, mentor programs, etc.).
- ❑ Checking in on a regular basis to stay apprised of the prospect's progress and possible needs for additional assistance to address unexpected issues and keep the project on track.



LAUNCH

The launch phase extends well beyond the gala of a grand opening event, with a focus placed on providing information, encouragement, and support as the new venture gains its footing or begins to scale up, evaluating the local business startup process, and inviting the owner to actively participate in district revitalization and enhancement efforts. Examples include:

- ❑ Posting temporary pre-opening signage on site (e.g. coming soon, something exciting is happening here, another reason to come back, etc.).
- ❑ With the owner, announcing the pending arrival and opening using news releases, social media posts, emails to subscribers, etc.
- ❑ Working with the owner to schedule a soft opening or private preview event for district business members and advocates, media, local officials, and community movers and shakers.
- ❑ Promoting and hosting or participating in a public grand opening ceremony or open house event.
- ❑ Making regular visits to check-in with the owner, to share information, and to extend an invitation to get involved in district business networking opportunities, collaborative marketing efforts, events, special projects, etc.
- ❑ Asking the owner for input and suggestions helpful to evaluating and fine-tuning the local business startup process (e.g., what went well, what was unexpected, what was most valuable, what could be improved, etc.). Use and share input and suggestions, as appropriate, in ongoing efforts to:
 - **Expand or enhance the quality of business startup support activities, resources, and materials**
 - **Streamline or fine-tune local business startup processes**
 - **Promote a business-friendly approach and environment**
- ❑ Inviting the owner to share a testimonial in a way that spotlights the new venture and, if appropriate, for use in district business development and recruitment marketing efforts.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[Main Street Charles City Business Resources Guide](#)

[Main Street Evert Available Properties List](#)

[Anniston, AL Business Guide](#)

[Charlotte, MI Starting a Business](#)

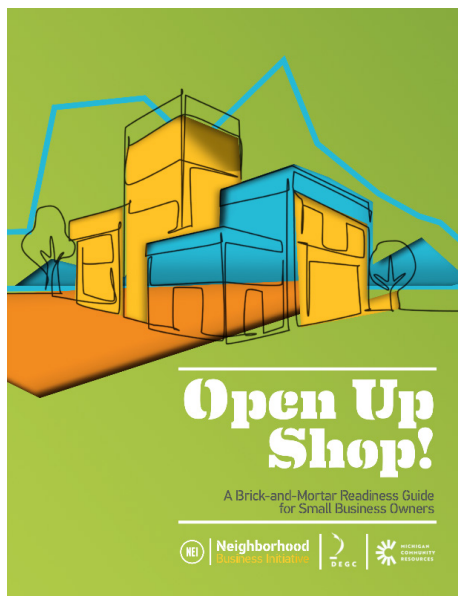
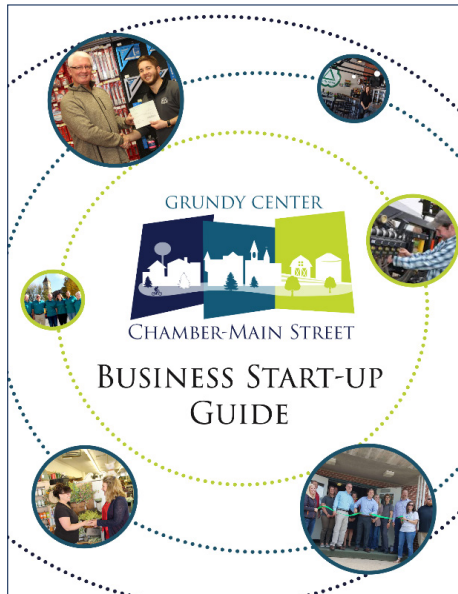
[Grundy Center Business Startup Guide](#)

The Business Startup Guide from Grundy Center, IA applies a colorful, user-friendly four-page format that highlights business activity and summarizes the business startup process in six key areas:

1. How do I create a business plan?
2. Locating your business
3. How long will it take to open?
4. Permits, licenses, and approvals
5. What should I budget?
6. Financing options and economic incentives

An FAQ used to highlight business support activities and resources is also included, and is built around questions like:

- What is the local market like?
- Are incentives available?
- How can I market my business?



[Open Up Shop! Open Up Shop!](#), A Brick-and-Mortar Readiness Guide for Small Business Owners, created and published by the Neighborhood Business Initiative (NBI) in conjunction with Detroit Economic Growth Corporation (DEGC), and with support from the New Economy Initiative (NEI), packages extensive educational content, worksheets and links to additional contacts and resources in a workbook format. The guide walks users through some of the essential steps for opening a business including:

- Getting your business plan in order
- Deciding what kind of space you need
- Choosing a location
- Designing and constructing your space
- Opening your doors

Visit DPN's [Ready to Recruit Library](#) for more business startup and recruitment example.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



- [Find a Mentor](#) ▾
- [Workshops & Events](#) ▾
- [Templates & Resources](#) ▾
- [Volunteer](#) ▾
- [About](#) ▾



Enter your zip to see local resources, events and mentors +

The Startup Roadmap: Your Guide to Successfully Starting a Business

A Step-by-Step, How-To Guide for Starting a Business

The Startup Roadmap outlines each step in starting a business with information and resources on the most difficult tasks. It also contains tips for working with your mentor on each topic.

[START YOUR JOURNEY](#)



U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) [Business Guide](#)



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Not sure where to start?

[Start your business in 10 steps](#)



[Plan your business](#)

You've got a great idea. Now, make a plan to turn it into a great business.



[Launch your business](#)

Turn your business into a reality. Register, file, and start doing business.



[Manage your business](#)

Run your business like a boss. Master day-to-day operations and prepare for success.



[Grow your business](#)

When business is good, it's time to expand. Find new funding, locations, and customers.

SCORE [Startup Roadmap](#)

