

Planning Your Event in Cedar Falls

A guide to organizing and hosting events in Cedar Falls, Iowa.



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Introduction

Congratulations on choosing to organize an event! We're excited that you are considering Cedar Falls. We think you'll agree that our city offers some of the best community events in the state.



As you will soon find out, launching an event is hard work that requires months of planning and a solid strategy. This guide has been developed by team members from the City of Cedar Falls, College Hill Partnership, Cedar Falls Community Main Street, and Cedar Falls Tourism. It was created to help you navigate the permits, logistics and many other details you'll want to take into consideration. It is intended to assist you in the process and hopefully make things easier. We compiled this information to the best of our knowledge at the time. Please confirm all details with the appropriate entities.

This guide also contains some event planning strategies based on our own experiences and what we believe may be helpful. If you have questions, or want to offer suggestions to improve it, please contact us at 319-268-4266. We appreciate your commitment to making Cedar Falls a better, more vibrant, place for everyone and we're here to help.



Locations and Contacts

There are several great locations for events in Cedar Falls. The following is a listing of locations that have frequently hosted public events along with a contact for each area.

Cedar Falls Downtown District

Cedar Falls Community Main Street

310 E. 4th Street

events@communitymainstreet.org

319-277-0213



The Cedar Falls Downtown District is a popular place for events due to its charm and welcoming appeal. Cedar Falls Community Main Street is a non-profit organization that works to manage, market, and maintain Cedar Falls' historic, cultural and entertainment district. They support the business community by improving downtown aesthetics, offering development opportunities to downtown businesses, organizing annual downtown events, and providing marketing and promotional services for the many downtown happenings.

College Hill Neighborhood

College Hill Partnership

PO Box 974

Collegehillpartnership@gmail.com

The College Hill neighborhood, also a great place for events, is located near the corner of 23rd and College Streets. The College Hill Partnership is a nonprofit organization that serves as the leader in promotion of the College Hill area, an urban neighborhood located directly adjacent to the University of Northern Iowa. Their mission includes promoting healthy neighborhood businesses as well as the marketing and organization of many festivals and events year-round.

Your Event and the Role of the College Hill Partnership and Community Main Street

Both the College Hill Partnership and Community Main Street enjoy seeing events come to the area, although they do not have the capacity or budget to be directly involved in implementing them. Each organization hosts their own annual series of events, and their role is not to fill the duties of the community event planner. They have limited budgets and staff that are committed to fulfilling their projects. The goal of their events is directly focused on getting people into shops and restaurants and exposing the public to all that their areas have to offer. As with all nonprofits, they are required to use funding for specific outcomes and must report back about how their resources have been spent. This can differ greatly from the purpose of your event and may be generally outside of their ability and scope. However, just because they can't organize your event doesn't mean they won't support it!

Parks and Trails

Cedar Falls Recreation Division

110 E. 13th Street
319-273-8636

The city maintains 45 parks, many of which could be the perfect setting for your event. The Island Park Beach House accommodates up to 180 people and is also an excellent location for events. To learn more about this and city parks, call 319-273-8636 or visit cedarfalls.com and click 'Recreation' on the homepage.

Cedar Valley Trails Partnership

6510 Hudson Road
trailevent@cedarvalleytrails.org

Considering the trails for your event? They are a good choice! With over 130 miles of hard-surfaced recreational trails to choose from – many of which are adjacent to the Cedar River and lakes and streams, Cedar Falls is an excellent location for running, cycling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and paddle/pedal events. The Cedar Valley Trails traverse the entire county which means they are owned and maintained by the Cities of Cedar Falls, Waterloo, Hudson, La Porte City and others; Black Hawk County, and the State of Iowa in George Wyth State Park. If you are planning an event on the trails, you'll need to prepare a Special Trails Event Registration which can be found at cedarvalleytrails.org/events/. Submitting this registration allows us to inform all the jurisdictions you will be using so trails are not overbooked and Public Safety and Parks personnel are aware of your event. You will also need to obtain a Public Event Permit which can be found at cedarfalls.com/public-event-permit.



Other City Spaces

The Hearst Center for the Arts, Cedar Falls Community Center, Cedar Falls Community Library and Cedar Falls Visitor Center are all city-owned facilities and make space available for events.

Cedar Falls Community Center

528 Main Street
cfdcommunitycenter@gmail.com
319-277-1900

Cedar Falls Visitor Center

6510 Hudson Road
Monday-Friday 8am-5pm
visit@cedarfalls.com
319-268-4266

Cedar Falls Recreation and Fitness Center

110 E. 13th Street
Christine.Anderson@cedarfalls.com
319-273-8636

Hearst Center for the Arts

6510 Hudson Road
Sheri.Huber-Otting@cedarfalls.com
319-268-5502

Other Private Spaces

Cedar Falls Tourism and Visitors Bureau

6510 Hudson Road
visit@cedarfalls.com
319-268-4266

There are also a number of additional indoor and outdoor spaces that are privately owned. See cedarfallstourism.org/visitor-center/rental for listings, photos, and contact information or call Cedar Falls Tourism at 319-268-4266.

University of Northern Iowa

Student Live & Event Services

Mike Bobeldyk, Director
Mike.Bobeldyk@uni.edu
319-273-5888

UNI offers a variety of spaces as well, accommodating up to 20,000 people. Information about university facilities can be found at union.uni.edu/event-services/conferences-events.



Resources

We love hosting events in Cedar Falls and all of the afore noted organizations stand ready to assist you by offering the following:

Advise about your event date and specific location.

- Any of these professionals can advise you on specific locations where events like the one you are planning have worked well.
- We also advise you to consult the CedarValley365.com calendar of events to ensure your event doesn't conflict with other large or similar events.

Promotion of your event.

- All of these organizations have expertise in promoting events on social media channels like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- Many produce newsletters and are happy to include your event, especially if it is happening in their district.
- All have relationships with local media and can help you with press releases, etc.
- You can submit your event on the CedarValley365.com calendar of events at no cost. Events on this calendar are included on printed event calendars and forwarded to other media outlets. This site is viewed by over 3,000 users each month and events can be shared easily among a variety of social media platforms.
- If your event is attended by visitors traveling at least 50 miles, Cedar Falls Tourism makes Tourism Development Funding available to attract, develop, and market. Applications must be received at least 90 days before the event and are accepted throughout the year. They are evaluated by the Tourism Board on a monthly basis. Applications can be found at cedarfallstourism.org/about-us/tourism-partnership-opportunities/tourism-development-funding.

Help connect you with local businesses.

- These organizations are happy to make introductions and brainstorm ways in which local businesses could get involved and excited about your event. They cannot request donations on your behalf.

Offer event advertising opportunity for placement in posters and flyers.

- Capturing the interest of people already frequenting the area with poster and flyers is a smart way to attract them back to your event.

Public Event Permits

A Public Event Permit application must be submitted and approved for certain public events held in or on city owned, occupied or controlled areas and/or facilities, including but not limited to city streets, right-of-ways, recreational trails, parks and plazas. The purpose of the Public Event Permit process is to ensure compliance with federal, state and local laws and regulations; to prevent substantial and unnecessary interference with traffic or publicly managed infrastructure projects; to ensure that fire, police and ambulance services are not impeded; to prevent unreasonable interference with or detract from the general public enjoyment of the property; to prevent unreasonable interference with the promotion of public health, safety, welfare and recreation; to avoid conflicts in the scheduling of public events; and to prevent unusual or extraordinary expense to the city. These applications are due at least 60 days prior to the commencement of the public event.

Examples of events that require a Public Events Permit include:

Neighborhood Block Parties
Run/Walk Events

Marathons
Parades

Farmers Markets

If your event includes amplified sound, a Noise Variance Permit may be required. The application includes further details and instructions. To access this, please go to cedarfalls.com/1609/Public-Event-Permit.



Planning Logistics

When organizing an event, it is your responsibility to coordinate all of the necessary logistics.

Below are some of the most common needs and possible solutions. Please work with the appropriate entities to ensure your event is properly planned.

Electricity:

For information about electricity options in public parks, please contact the Cedar Falls Public Works and Parks Division Supervisor at (319) 273-8629.

Cedar Falls Utilities is the electric utility provider for Cedar Falls College Hill and the Downtown District. They do not provide electricity for public use in these areas. If you need electricity for your event, please contact the owner of the event space or land.

When in doubt, consider using generators or solar powered batteries. If you're having vendors at your event who will need power, please talk with them well ahead to assure their needs can be reasonably accommodated. You could try to coordinate (in advance of your event, of course) use of power via a nearby business if the business, although there is no guarantee that businesses will be willing to offer this to you.

Trash & Recycling: Trash cans are located both in the downtown and College Hill area. They are maintained by the city and are emptied on a weekly basis. They serve the purposes of day to day operations and most likely will not be sufficient to accommodate your event as well. If you are expecting a high volume of attendees you should contact the Public Works Division at 319-273-8629 and inquire about portable containers that you can place strategically throughout your event. Place them near sources of waste, such as food.

Restrooms: Consider how many people your event



will draw and where attendees will access restrooms. Existing area businesses do not all have public restrooms and those with restrooms do not appreciate having people come in only to use their facility. In fact, sometimes businesses decide to close during events simply because they don't want to deal with this specific and common issue.

Please consider renting portable restrooms and situating them in out of the way areas that will not be disruptive. As for how many you will need, consider how many people will attend your event, the duration of the event, and if alcohol is being served. A portable restroom company can help you estimate the number of units you will need.

Providing restrooms is only useful if people know where to find them. Use clear signage to direct people towards the restrooms and help keep everyone happy.

Parking: Both the downtown and College Hill areas have a large variety of parking options. Learn more about parking and view maps at cedarfalls.com/Parking.

Accessibility: It is important to consider if your event is accessible to individuals with disabilities. This may include handicap accessible restrooms, handicap parking spaces, ease of access into the event space and allowance of service animals, to name just a few. The Americans with Disabilities Act National Network provides a guide for making temporary events accessible to people with disabilities, which can be found [here](#).

Cleanup: It is your responsibility to leave the area in the same condition as you found it. Leaving downtown, the Hill or park a mess will reflect poorly on your organization and will frustrate the city, the organizations, and businesses and property owners who will have to clean up after you. It could also jeopardize your ability to receive approval to locate future events in public areas.

When planning the volunteer team for your event, don't forget to schedule a group to pick up and survey the area afterwards.

Special Considerations when using College Hill and the Downtown District

When you bring an event into the downtown or College Hill area, you need to consider the businesses that are located there. Although you may already have obtained a public event permit, it is the businesses that will be most directly impacted. You can make this a positive experience by considering these tips:

- Inform businesses of your plans as early as possible, one to two months in advance if possible. Leave behind a description of your event and include all of the pertinent details. If streets are going to be closed, include a map of exactly which streets, where on the street (is it the whole street or just part of one?) and during what times. Employees and customers will need to know how to get in and out of a business well in advance of the day of your event.
- Provide your contact information with affected businesses and clarify that you are the person to get in touch with regarding the event. Neither Community Main Street nor the College Hill Partnership can speak on your behalf.
- Pitch creative ways in which a business may get involved in your event. Be considerate. Staying open late, setting up outside, and other requests outside of the day to day operations may not be feasible for some businesses with limited staff and resources.
- Listen to their thoughts and concerns. Your event could potentially disrupt one of the busiest days for a business and cost them hundreds or possibly thousands of dollars. There may be simple ways in which you can accommodate their requests.
- Realize that just because your event may bring people into the business district, this does not necessarily equate to sales for the businesses. Consider this - if you're running a race, would you want to stop and do some shopping afterwards when you're sweaty and tired? Likely not.

Getting Started

Here are some of the most important steps we recommend to get your event off to a good start in your selected area.



- Review this entire guide.
- Work through the event planning sheet we've included or create one of your own.
- Contact Community Main Street, College Hill Partnership, and Cedar Falls Tourism about the timing of other area events and avoid conflict. Informing them from the start helps them communicate with businesses and inform others looking to plan events in area.
- Obtain a public events permit and any other permits, as needed, with the City of Cedar Falls.
- Start planning! Consider all of the logistics you may need, including those mentioned here.
- Once you have determined all of the details, send them to Community Main Street, College Hill Partnership and/or Cedar Falls Tourism to add to their calendars.
- Talk with area businesses one to two months in advance, if not earlier. If you're closing streets or planning to take up space in front of a storefront, let each of the businesses know your plans.
- Create a marketing plan. Here are a few basic ideas to get started.
 - Create a Facebook event page.
 - Send press releases to local outlets.
 - Advertise in a variety of sources, including those geared towards your target audience.
- Establish a team of volunteers to carry out tasks the day of the event or the days leading up to the event. Create a task list and assign duties to each volunteer. Not sure where to find volunteers? Look to some of the larger local businesses who dedicate time to give back to the community or contact organizations that include volunteerism as part of their mission, such as church groups or rotary clubs. The Volunteer Center of the Cedar Valley also provides assistance in volunteer recruitment. They can be reached at 319-883-3015 or vccv.org.

EVENT PLANNING

Some planning suggestions we hope you'll consider

Your Goal: What is the purpose of this event? Are you raising money? Creating awareness? Something else? An event should always have a goal that is clear to everyone involved.

What: What is your event? What makes it unique? If there are already similar events happening, try thinking outside the box to get the most interest from the community. It should be fun, interesting and/or exciting! Be clear. A vague or confusing description and name will not resonate with people.

Who: There are many different types:

- Who is your target audience? Families? Young professionals? Seniors? “Everyone” is too broad.
- Who will participate? Are you having vendors? Asking downtown businesses?
- Who will volunteer to help? Look to businesses or organizations dedicated to volunteer work.
- Who can you partner with that can play an active role?

When: Timing is key. If you plan your event the same day as several other events, or in close proximity to another event, you may end up competing for people’s time and energy. Check the cedarvalley365.com calendar of events to avoid overlapping. If you’re planning to fundraise, consider who else may be fundraising at the same time. If you’re targeting the same audience, you may want to reconsider to avoid competing for the same dollars.

Where: Community events are awesome! But they may have unintended impacts. Think about where you event is located and how it may disrupt the normal schedule of business for others. Also keep in mind important logistics, such as where attendees will park, if the space will accommodate the anticipated crowd, the location of restrooms and the accessibility for all. Don’t forget safety!

Budget: Establishing a budget is a great idea. What will your event cost to put on? Think rental fees, entertainment, supplies, giveaways and advertising. Then consider opportunities to generate income like sponsorships, and participation fees.

Marketing Strategy: Half the battle of a good event is getting people to know about it and convincing them to care. Brainstorm all the possible outlets you can use to promote your event, including free or in-kind options. Newspapers, social media, radio, television, flyers and various digital platforms are all options. Go back to your target attendees then think of where you can best reach them. If your event will attract visitors to the community, you may qualify for a Tourism Development Funding from Cedar Falls Tourism. Applications must be received at least 90 days before your event and can be found at CedarFallsTourism.org in the partnership opportunities section.



Timeline: Planning a successful event takes time and organization. Professional event planners suggest 3-6 months for a single day event or up to 9-12 months for a major event or fundraiser.

Plan out committee meetings between now and your event and detail due dates for various aspects, such as sponsorship commitments and press releases.

Day of Strategy: Take into account logistics such as setup, check-in, troubleshooting and cleanup. Assign roles for your volunteers ahead of time and make sure everyone knows their responsibilities.

Post Event: Be sure to thank everyone involved, both with personal thank you cards and publicly in some fashion. Have a debrief session and record notes for future planning.



EVENT PLANNING WORKSHEET

NAME OF EVENT:

GOAL/PURPOSE:

EVENT DESCRIPTION:

WHEN:

WHERE:

PRIMARY PLANNER:

PARTNERS:

TARGET ATTENDEES:

FUNDING (INCOME/EXPENSE):

TIMELINE:

NEXT STEPS/TO DO'S

Important Contacts

Questions Regarding	Contact	Telephone
Amusement Ride or Device Inflatable Bungee Jump	Iowa Division of Labor Amusement@iwd.iowa.gov	515-725-5612 515-725-5608 515-281-7689
Barricades Picnic Table Rental Trash and Recycling Receptacles	Brian Heath Brian.Heath@cedarfalls.com	319-273-8629
Noise Variance Permit Open Container Laws Street Closure/Traffic Control/Parking Signs, Service Animals Regulations	Police@cedarfalls.com	319-273-8612
Building Permit Electrical Permit	Jamie Castle Jamie.Castle@cedarfalls.com	319-268-5189
Cedar Falls Community Center	CFCommunityCenter@gmail.com	319-277-1900
Cedar Falls Public Relations	Amanda Huisman Amanda.Huisman@cedarfalls.com	319-268-5159
Cedar Falls Utilities		319-266-1761
Cedar Valley 365 Calendar of Events	Visit@cedarfallstourism.org	319-268-4266
Certificate(s) of Insurance	Colleen Sole Colleen.Sole@cedarfalls.com	319-243-2712
College Hill Partnership	CollegeHillPartnership@gmail.com	
Community Main Street	Events@communitymainstreet.org	319-277-0213
Construction	Chase Schrage Chase.Schrage@cedarfalls.com	319-273-8629
Display Fireworks Permit Tent/Canopy Inspection	Fire@cedarfalls.com	319-273-8612
Food Licenses and Tap Trailers	Black Hawk County Health Dept. bhcpulichealth.org/services/food-safety	319-291-2413
Hearst Center for the Arts	Sheri Huber-Otting Sheri.huber-otting@cedarfalls.com	319-268-5502
Liquor License/Wine Permit/Beer Permit	Licensing@cedarfalls.com	319-273-8600
Overman Park Band Shell Rental	Judy Larkin	319-415-6543
Park Shelter/Beach House Rental Sturgis Park Cedar Basin Band Shell Rental Park Usage Permit	Cedar Falls Recreation Center	319-273-8636
Pools, Spas, Waterslide	Iowa Dept. of Public Health	800-972-2017
Sign Approval	Planning@cedarfalls.com	319-273-8606
Tourism Development Funding	Jennifer Pickar Jennifer.Pickar@cedarfallstourism.org	319-268-4266
Trails Registration	Cedar Valley Trails Partnership TrailEvent@cedarvalleytrails.org	
Water/Hydrants	Tyler Griffin Tyler.Griffin@cedarfalls.com	319-268-5561