

RIBBON CUTTING AND SPECIAL EVENTS



PLANNING GUIDE



One of the most exciting events for a business, whether new or existing, is a ribbon cutting to celebrate a grand opening, anniversary, or business milestone.

The Flint & Genesee Chamber has created this ribbon cutting planning guide to assist you throughout the process, including organizing, prioritizing, and preparing for your event.



WHY SHOULD WE HAVE A RIBBON CUTTING?

A ribbon cutting ceremony is an important part of your overall marketing and advertising plan, and is a great way to kick-off a grand opening of a business. It can offer the opportunity to announce to the community that you are open for business, to meet key community leaders, and get acquainted with your neighbors and chamber members.

WHO SHOULD HAVE A RIBBON CUTTING EVENT?

Chamber members in good-standing who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- New businesses/organizations opening (within last 6 months) or breaking ground
- Businesses/organizations who have moved to a new location
- Businesses/organizations who have completed a major renovation or remodeling
- Businesses under new ownership or new management
- Businesses/organizations celebrating a major milestone anniversary



EVENT TIMELINE

PRE-PLANNING

The right date will affect the outcome



SCHEDULE A DATE



More people equals greater impact



CHOOSE AN EMCEE

A good speaker guides the program

Thank guests with tasty treats



PLAN A MENU



CONTACT MEDIA

Take steps to increase media coverage

An agenda keeps the event moving



PLAN THE PROGRAM



GATHER MATERIALS

Ready set-up, event and takeaways

Show the world your success



SHARE EXPERIENCE

SCHEDULING

Selecting a date is one of the most important decisions you will make as you begin the process of planning and staging a successful event. It can affect all aspects of the outcome, and is worth very careful thought. Before you make your decision, here are some important things to consider:

- Allow plenty of time for preparation. We recommend a month to no less than three weeks to make all your arrangements. After you've chosen a day/time and would like to have chamber involvement, please call or email Jennie Main at the Chamber to confirm availability of chamber staff and ambassadors, at 810-600-1459 or jmain@flintandgenesees.org. A minimum of three weeks' notice is required.
- Be aware of major holidays and avoid planning your event on or near those days.
- Try to avoid a conflict with major community events and activities. Check the chamber's community calendar at flintandgenesees.org/events
- The best days of the week to get good attendance are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Mondays tend to be too busy for most people to leave the office and many people take Fridays off (especially in the summer) to start their weekend early.

- The best times to do a ribbon cutting are around the lunch hour, or at the end of the work day, 4-5 p.m. Early morning, mid-morning, or mid-afternoon times are usually the least attended.
- Avoid planning your event on a Saturday or Sunday. Most people have their own plans on those days, and our experience tells us that your attendance could drop significantly. Chamber staff and Ambassadors are available during normal business hours during the week.
- After date and time have been mutually agreed upon by the chamber, please fill out and submit the "Member Event Support" form on our website: flintandgenesees.org/eventsupport.



INVITATIONS

Invite as many people as possible for the greatest impact. The invitation list may include: family, friends, current customers, suppliers/vendors, employees and their families, neighboring businesses, business associates, government officials, and media outlets. Once invitees are identified, consider the following to get the word out:

- Create an invitation or letter, flier, or postcard with pertinent information – event, date, time, address, map, logo – and mail two to four weeks prior via first class mail. Invitations can also be emailed. Request RSVPs if desired to help plan for food and beverages.
- Use social media to advertise your event (such as creating a Facebook event). Be sure to also include the specifics on your website.
- Consider other advertising methods such as newsletters, posters, marquees, or banners.



EMCEE/SPEAKERS

Choose an emcee to welcome your guests and introduce any other speakers. He or she may also offer a few remarks, thank appropriate persons and recognize VIPs in attendance who will not be speaking. (Chamber staff is available to serve as emcee if requested) If planning to include guest speakers, contact them early so they have enough time to prepare remarks and tell them how long they will have to speak. This is typically very brief – two to three minutes. Call to confirm their attendance approximately one week prior to event.

If chamber staff is serving as emcee, please be sure to provide us list of speakers we will be introducing.

FOOD/BEVERAGES

Serving food and beverages is a nice way to thank those who came to celebrate your special day. When planning food and beverages, it is important to make time-appropriate selections. Tips to keep in mind when planning a menu:

- For morning events, coffee, juice, fruit and pastries are sufficient.
- Remember, for luncheon events guests will be spending their lunchtime with you, so provide something substantive such as a sandwich, roll-up/ wrap, salad or pasta.
- During late afternoon events, light hors d'oeuvres are appropriate such as finger foods and vegetable/fruit/cheese platters.
- If serving alcohol, it should only be served at late afternoon or evening events. Be sure to have non-alcoholic beverages as well.
- Consider using a caterer for medium or large events. Chamber can provide list of members providing catering services.
- Don't forget a sufficient amount of plates, cups, napkins, silverware & trash cans.

CONTACT MEDIA

Because of competing events and stories, media coverage cannot be guaranteed. However, efforts should be made to engage them. Below are steps to increase your chances of getting media coverage.

- Send a press release to local newspapers and t.v./radio stations at least 7 days before your event. Contact the Chamber for a sample press release if needed.
- Your press release should cover the journalistic basics of who, what, when, where, & why.
- A follow-up or reminder call/email to the media the day before is a good idea.
- Although a chamber staff member will take some pictures, you'll want to designate a staff member or friend to take candid photos of people and happenings at your event. You can also send photos (i.e. cutting the ribbon or shoveling dirt for a groundbreaking) to media and the Chamber after the event.

EVENT AND POST EVENT

PLANNING A PROGRAM

Whether you're staging a groundbreaking or a ribbon cutting for your organization, it adds a nice touch to an event to have a brief program of some kind. It provides not only valuable recognition for you and your key people, but it makes the event more purposeful, and allows you to explain more about your business. Consider these suggestions when planning your program or formal ceremony:

- The shorter, the better. People have very brief attention spans at these events, and you might lose part of the crowd if the program drags on too long. As a rule of thumb, no program or official ceremony should last more than 20-30 minutes, with 10-15 minutes being ideal.
- Limit the number of speakers (we recommend 5 or less) and the length of their speeches. Set a time limit for all those you ask to take part in the program, and confirm their attendance the day before.
- Introduce only those speaking and acknowledge key supporters in a general "group" thank you. A podium may be helpful for scheduled speakers.
- For large gatherings, a microphone system may be helpful. Contact the chamber if one is needed.
- Conclude the program with the appropriate ceremonial activity – ribbon cutting, shoveling of dirt for groundbreaking, etc.
- If an open house follows the program, have friendly, knowledgeable employees prepared to conduct group tours.
- Always have a back-up plan in case of rain, such as moving ceremony inside at your place of business.
- Please be sure to block the two parking spots in front of your building so that no one parks their car where we will be speaking, taking pictures, cutting the ribbon, etc.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Materials you may need will depend on the scale of your event and the planned activities. For example, if you have speakers, you may need a podium, microphone, and chairs. You may also include decorations and flowers, a large display flag, a welcome sign, name tags and a guest book for people to sign as they enter.

- The chamber will supply the official ribbon cutting "giant scissors" (or shovels, if applicable) and ribbon.
- If serving food, determine number of tables, linens, and trash cans needed and their placement.
- While not necessary, you may want to give a small favor to your guests, such as a specialty item, flower, brochure, gift bag, etc.
- You may also want to offer an advertised discount promotion to attendees, such as 15% off during a designated time frame.

POST EVENT TASKS

- Be sure to send thank you notes to all your speakers, sponsors and other VIPs.
- Consider sharing your photos/videos by posting them online (website and social media), including them in your newsletter if you have one, sending to media, etc.



CONTACT US

We look forward to working with you!

For more information or questions about the ribbon cutting process, please contact

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