



Rahway Special Improvement District Report

Monday, December 11, 2023

I. **SID Business Improvement Program** – Forgivable loans for new and existing Rahway businesses for the following areas:

- Fit Out/Interior Improvements = Up to \$2,000 per business
- Signage = Up to \$2,000 per business
- Brand Marketing/Design Services = Up to \$2,000 per business
- MBE Certified – Minority, Women, Veteran, LGBTQ = \$1,000 per business that has or gets the certification
- The maximum given to one business is \$7,000.
- Businesses must stay in operation for one year to have it be 50% forgiven and two years to have it be 100% forgiven.
- Applications were open from March 1st and closed on April 30th.

Update

- There was a total of 130 applicants for the BIP. 109 businesses met the established criteria for eligibility.
- Funding requests were due by September 1, 2023.
- 62 businesses have submitted their funding requests.
- The funding requests have been reviewed by SID staff. The City Planner has reviewed all requests for signage to ensure that all proposed signs are compliant with municipal zoning ordinances.
- At present, 22 of 62 businesses have completed everything and are in the final stages of receiving funding.

Facade Improvement Program - \$250,000 has been allocated for property owners to improve their exterior facades and storefronts as \$10,000 forgivable loans.

Update

- A letter was sent to all applicants of the FIP notifying them of their eligibility status. Eligible applicants will need to schedule a consultation by October 1st with the SID Project Manager and City Planner about proposed improvements.
- There was a total of 32 applicants for the FIP. 24 applicants met the established criteria for eligibility.
- The SID Project Manager and City Planner have met with 14 applicants and are awaiting further paperwork for approval.
- 10 property owners are ready to receive funding and are working with SID and UCEDC to finalize paperwork.

II. **Small Business Weekend**

- For the second year in a row, the SID and the Rahway Chamber of Commerce are working together on some initiatives for Small Business Weekend.
- The initiative has grown from just focusing on Small Business Saturday to encourage residents and visitors to support small businesses from Black Friday-Cyber Monday (November 24-27) and throughout the holiday shopping season.
- 150 reusable bags were filled with promotional material from 20 different Rahway businesses. These swag bags were given away to anyone making a purchase at participating businesses. The bags were provided by the Union County Department of Economic Development as part of their #UCLovesSmallBiz campaign.

- The SID sponsored a raffle for gift cards to Rahway businesses and UCPAC. Anyone who made a purchase at one of our 15 participating businesses during Small Business Weekend was able to enter for a chance to win:
 - First Prize: \$300 value in Gift Cards to your choice of Rahway Restaurants or Retail business. Plus, a \$50 Gift Card toward a UCPAC show of your choice.
 - Second Prize: \$200 value in Gift Cards to your choice of Rahway Restaurants or Retail business.
 - Third Prize: \$100 value in Gift Cards to your choice of Rahway Restaurants or Retail business.

This year we had 295 raffle entries, up from 130 in 2022.

- To support local artists and creators, the city hosted a Holiday Market at the Cherry Street Mall (75 E Cherry St) and in several other locations downtown (Watt Hotel, Wholly Cow, Coffee Box, the Rahway Refillery and Atelier Rosal) on Saturday, November 25 from 11am-3pm. 16 vendors participated by selling locally produced, handcrafted products.
- The Holiday Window Decorating Contest, sponsored by the SID and the Rahway Chamber of Commerce and hosted by Rahway Rising, returned for its second year. 18 businesses throughout the city are participating and have decked out their windows with art, lights and other decorations. This year, we will have two winners. The People's Choice Award will be decided by popular vote which will be open to all residents and visitors to Rahway. People can vote for their favorite décor at Rahwayrising.com. The other winner will be decided by members of the Senior Art Class who will be visiting each window to check out all the creative designs and décor.

III. Ribbon Cuttings

- **Spanish Restaurant 3** - Located at 988 St Georges Avenue, Spanish Restaurant 3 is a family-owned restaurant serving authentic Dominican entrees, desserts and natural juices.

IV. Upcoming Events

- Soup Stroll 2024 – January 6, 13, 20 and 27