



# Rahway Special Improvement District Report

## Monday, April 8, 2024

### I. SID Business Improvement Program –

- Forgivable loans for new and existing Rahway businesses for Interior Improvements, Signage and Brand Marketing/Design Services up to \$2,000 in each category.
- MBE Certified Businesses (Minority, Women, Veteran, LGBTQ) that has or gets the certification are eligible for additional \$1,000.

#### Update

- There were 130 applicants for the BIP. 109 businesses met the established criteria for eligibility.
- 62 businesses have submitted their funding requests.
- At present, 39 of 62 businesses have completed all the steps and have received funding.

Business	Business Address	Total
2 World Studios	1544 Irving St	\$5,000
Arch Angels NJ LLC	1600 St Georges Ave.	\$6,412
Bongiovi Chiropractic Center	764 Jefferson Ave	\$1,800
Chicken Delight	1685 St Georges Ave	\$3,647
Coffee Box	1465 Irving Street	\$4,290
Compliments by A Myles	156 East Milton Ave	\$6,973
Cooks Kitchn	1685 St Georges Ave	\$6,000
Copacabana Coffee	77 E. Milton Ave	\$3,970
Cultured Expressions	1417 Main St	\$2,907
Darkside Industries	1571 Irving St	\$3,822
Dason Stainless Products	1773 Elizabeth Ave	\$2,000
Diamond Studio Lash & Brow	1653 Irving St	\$6,000
Dr. Gregg Schneider	1271 Westfield Ave.	\$5,755
Gigi's Latin Bistro	1524 Irving St	\$2,000
Hellhound Studios	1605 Coach St	\$1,990
Instile Stone Corp	713 New Brunswick Ave	\$2,000
La Chula Tex Mex	78 E Cherry St	\$6,000
La Malinche	1588 Irving St	\$4,000
Le Bijou Nail & Spa	382 St Georges Ave	\$1,200
Luxury Elite Wellness	1567 Irving St	\$6,831
Melao Cafe & Creamery	1425 Irving St	\$5,058
Michelino's Pizza	79 E Milton Ave	\$2,000
Millie & Joy	1361 Franklin St	\$4,000
MNM Fitness	1521 Main St	\$4,880
Nancy's Towne House	1453 Main Street	\$4,980
Navi Salon	1673 Irving St	\$1,485
Nutradontics	1271 Westfield Ave.	\$2,000
PMU Studio	1275 Westfield Ave, Ste 4	\$4,000

Protein Corner	548 W. Grand Ave	\$2,000
Pupz Club	1419 Irving Street	\$5,865
Quality 1st Auto Repair	300 St Georges Ave	\$3,890
Rahway Primary Care	1531 Irving St	\$6,000
Rahway Sushi	75 E. Cherry St	\$2,000
Sabor Peruano	1576 Irving Street	\$7,000
Santana Agency	75 E Cherry St	\$2,697
Spruce Industries	759 E. Lincoln Avenue	\$2,000
The Wannabees	40 E Cherry St	\$2,903
Vendee Events	275 E Grand Ave	\$5,000
Wet Ticket Brewing	1435 Main St	\$4,000

## II. Facade Improvement Program

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

### Update

- There was a total of 32 applicants for the FIP. 24 applicants met the established criteria for eligibility.
- 10 property owners are ready to receive funding and are working with SID and UCEDC to finalize paperwork.
- 4 property owners have completed the work and received funding.

## III. Website Revamp

- [www.Rahwayishappening.com](http://www.Rahwayishappening.com) website will undergo an overhaul to help make it a more user-friendly experience for visitors to the site.
- The site was first created in 2016 and has undergone updates, but this will be the first large scale update to the site in eight years.
- Some of the improvements will include easier to navigate menus, a newly designed Events Calendar and Business Directory and a facelift that will give the site a more modern look. Behind the scenes improvements will also be made to allow for a better user experience.

## IV. Women in Business Networking Event – Wednesday, March 27 from 6-8pm at Nancy's Townhouse (1453 Main Street)

- WOMEN TALKING BUSINESS OVER PIZZA - A Casual Gathering About Serious Business
- The event will be led and moderated by Jacqueline Lombardo and Sheryl Rosenstock from Wizdom Media
- This 2-hour meet-up/workshop is dedicated to local Rahway women entrepreneurs, with an introduction to tools which will potentially help them thrive in both their professional and personal lives.
- This gathering will focus on marketing with a focus on practical approaches like time blocking, task prioritization, automation tools, outsourcing non-core activities, and integrating marketing into daily routines.
- There will also be time for networking and opportunities to meet other women business owners.
- As of March 25<sup>th</sup>, 35 women were registered for the event.

**V. Rahway Taste of Spring - April 5, 2024, from 5:30-9pm at the Rahway Rec Center**

- Tickets went on sale on Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup> and sold out by March 26. Over 1,000 tickets were sold.
- There are 43 eating and drinking establishments that are registered for the event, 30 of which are from Rahway. (the most Rahway restaurants in the 21 years of the event)
- This year we will feature a craft beer tent with 4 local craft breweries which can be enjoyed while tasting samples of pizza, tacos and Columbian hot dogs and listening to the Sweater Pills play acoustic covers of hit songs. The dessert tent will feature coffee, gelato, and pastries and the sweet sounds of jazz from the Bradford Hayes Quartet.
- There are 9 judges ready to taste and select winners in 8 different categories. Our judges range from social media influencers, local journalists, Rahway business owners, and former Rahway's Own honoree Gary Gonzalez.
- We have been working with Recreation, Police, Fire, Health, and Department of Public Works to coordinate the day of logistics to ensure another successful event.

**VI. NJ Art and Music Express – Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>**

- This is a new event that Rahway is hosting in partnership with the Township of Woodbridge and sponsored by NJ TRANSIT.
- Each municipality will host a day of art and music events.
- Visitors will be able to ride NJ Transit for free between Rahway, Avenel and Woodbridge stations to experience the art scene in near each of them.
- NJ TRANSIT will assist in marketing the event through their social media and on digital screens at the stations along North Jersey Coast Line from Secaucus Junction south to Bay Head.
- Rahway's Events include:
  - Acoustic performances on Train Station Plaza to greet visitors arriving via the train.
  - NCNW Rahway Creates will have art on display at various locations throughout the downtown.
  - Mural Dedication and Artist Meet & Greet at Arts District Park as well as a drop-in artmaking workshop.
  - In honor of Star Wars Day (May the 4<sup>th</sup> be with you) UCPAC Main Stage will have an open house event featuring a live Wurlitzer organ performance of the iconic John Williams compositions followed by a movie screening of Rogue One: A Star Wars Story.
  - Hamilton Stage will feature the Golden Gals Live (ticketed show).
  - Further details and events are still in the planning stages, and we are inviting our local businesses to participate by hosting their own event for the day.

**VII. Dinner & Show with UCPAC**

- The Dinner and Show program that began in 2022 and continued in 2023 showed good results, but after discussions with UCPAC and our restaurants, we felt that building in some consistency would be to the benefit of all parties.
- Dinner & Show deals will be available at 10 participating restaurants every time there is UCPAC presented show at the Main Stage.
- Patrons just need to show their tickets at the time of ordering.
- UCPAC will promote the Dinner & Show Deals on their website, marketing emails, and signage in the theater.
- Each participating restaurant will receive signage with upcoming shows.

- Participating Restaurants: Cubanu, Gigi's Latin Bistro, La Chula, La Malinche, Luciano's, Moaaz Mediterranean Grill, Nancy's Townhouse, Sabor Peruano, The Lounge at Watt Hotel, The Waiting Room

### **VIII. Ongoing Initiatives and Programs**

- **Holiday Lights**
  - We are currently seeking proposals and estimates for new lighting designs and holiday décor. We are looking to illuminate the downtown and create curated areas that will attract residents and visitors to the city to explore all that Rahway has to offer.
- **Training & Continuing Education Opportunities for Businesses**
  - We are working with the Rahway Department of Health, as well as county and state agencies to set up opportunities for our businesses to receive continued training and educational opportunities.
  - We are again partnering with the Rahway Department of Health to provide ServSafe Food Manager training for our restaurants. This training will take place on June 10<sup>th</sup>.
  - In the fall, we are looking to bring in state and county agencies that can provide grant information as well as courses on small business management skills.

### **IX. Public Art**

- In the past year, the SID has been a part of several public art projects beginning with the MLK Park Sculpture (MLK Park), the Geometric Mural on train facing side of the Mint II (84 Monroe Street), the River Goddess Mural (E. Cherry St).
- On May 4<sup>th</sup>, there will be a dedication of the newest mural, the Native Perennials Mural, at Arts District Park.
- Plans have been finalized for a mural that will be painted on the track facing side of the Extra Space Storage Building (2255 Elizabeth Ave). The artist is expected to begin in late spring.
- We have worked with Rachael Faillace and Wizdom Media to compile a Public Art Map on the Rahway is Happening website. This map will provide residents and visitors to the city with information and guide to all the public art in Rahway. The second phase of this project will be to add QR codes near the public art so that people can find out more information about the art, the artist and for the newer projects, progress photos.

### **X. Ribbon Cuttings**

- **Tribeca Pediatrics – 1501 Main Street**
  - Mayor Giacobbe officially welcomed Tribeca Pediatrics to downtown Rahway on March 12<sup>th</sup>. Committed doctors and staff bring high quality pediatric care to the downtown and strive to raise the bar for their patients by providing convenient accessible care with a personal touch.
- **Plantabis Dispensary – 2077 US Route 1**
  - On March 15<sup>th</sup>, New Jersey Senate President Nicholas Scutari joined Mayor Raymond Giacobbe, Councilman Jeffrey Brooks, and Councilman Al Parker at the grand opening of Plantabis, Rahway's first recreational cannabis dispensary. Plantabis is a certified woman- and minority-owned business that has received full licensure from the State of New Jersey and The City of Rahway.