



Rahway Special Improvement District Report

Monday, July 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.
- **UPDATE:** The application for the program opened on March 1, 2023, and approval letters were sent in June 2023. We gave a deadline of June 30, 2024, for those businesses who were approved to submit funding requests or to notify the SID of the status of their progress. 54 of 62 businesses have completed all the steps and have received funding. There are a few more still in the process and we are working with them to complete everything and receive funding.

Business	Business Address	Total Amount
2 World Studios	1544 Irving St	\$5,000
Adeline Deli	45 E Milton Ave	\$3,226
Arch Angels NJ LLC	1600 St Georges Ave.	\$6,412
Arista Yoga and Holistic Wellness Group	75 E. Cherry St # 9A	\$5,485
B & B General Contractors	248 Wescott Dr	\$2,000
Bongiovi Chiropractic Center	764 Jefferson Ave	\$1,800
CasaMon Carribbean Cuisine	1577 Elizabeth Ave	\$600
Chicken Delight	1685 St Georges Ave	\$3,647
Cholao El P'Tos	1831 Paterson St #3	\$6,000
Clark Animal Hospital	1075 Westfield Ave	\$2,000
Coffee Box	1465 Irving Street	\$4,290
Compliments by A Myles	156 East Milton Ave	\$4,973
Cooks Kitchn	1685 St Georges Ave	\$6,000
Copacabana Coffee	77 E. Milton Ave	\$2,000
Cultured Expressions	1417 Main St	\$2,907
Darkside Industries	1571 Irving St	\$3,822
Dason Stainless Products	1773 Elizabeth Ave	\$2,000
Davis Financial Services	1523 Irving St	\$4,034
Diamond Studio Lash & Brow	1653 Irving St	\$6,000
Dr. Gregg Schneider	1271 Westfield Ave.	\$3,755
Ebony & Ivory	39 E Milton Avenue	\$2,000
Gigi's Latin Bistro	1524 Irving St	\$2,000
Hellhound Studios	1605 Coach St	\$1,990
Instile Stone Corp	713 New Brunswick Avenue	\$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
Nail Rehab Spa	205 W. Main St	\$5,000
Nancy's Towne House	1453 Main Street	\$3,230
Navi Salon	1673 Irving St	\$1,485
Nutradontics	1271 Westfield Ave.	\$2,000
PMU Studio	1275 Westfield Ave, Ste 4	\$4,000
Prestige Hair Salon	2343 St Georges Ave	\$5,919
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 Dance Theatre School	1575 Irving St	\$5,000
Rahway Primary Care	1531 Irving St	\$6,000
Rahway Sushi	75 E. Cherry St	\$2,000
Rocky's Bar & Grill	710 W Grand Ave	\$3,920
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 Dance Studio	40 E Cherry St	\$2,903
Tiger Martial Arts	385 St Georges Ave	\$2,000
Travel Skate Shop	43 E Cherry St	\$4,000
Vendee Events	275 E Grand Ave	\$3,000
West Carpets	385 St Georges Ave	\$3,000
Wet Ticket Brewing	1435 Main St	\$2,000

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.
- **UPDATE:** 7 property owners have completed the work and received funding.

III. Public Art Incentive Program Amendment to the FIP

- The purpose of this amendment is to encourage the completion of significant public art projects on private property. Public art enriches the community and fuels the local creative economy. These projects provide artists, fabricators, and other tradespeople with income while contributing to the unique cultural identity of the community. The

economic impact of public art includes supporting commerce by attracting visitors to Rahway and contributing to the enhancement of neighborhoods. It can underscore community values and engage the public in compelling ways.

- Eligible commercial property owners located in the City of Rahway can apply for up to \$10,000 per property/location for a public art installation on their property.
- The Public Art Incentive Program will be funded through the Rahway Special Improvement District or other funding source if and when they become available.
- Public art may include painted murals, wall art, freestanding or suspended sculpture, mosaics and ceramics, light art, architectural metal, architectural glass, and forms of interactive art.
- To qualify as public art, artwork must be designed to be visible or experienced by the public from within the public realm. The public realm is a collective term for spaces accessible to the public, including any publicly owned streets, pathways, sidewalks, right of ways, parks, or publicly accessible open spaces.
- If approved for the Public Art Incentive Program, the property owner and the City shall enter into an agreement that outlines the terms and responsibilities of the involved parties.
- Funding has been prioritized based on the zoning district in which a commercial property is located.
 - CBD – RA: Central Business District Redevelopment Area and RAD- RA: Rahway Arts District Redevelopment Area – Up to \$10,000
 - B-1: Neighborhood Business Zone, B-2: Regional Business Zone, B-4: Service Business Zone, WGO: West Grand Overlay – Up to \$7,500
 - B-3: Highway Business Zone, I-H: Heavy Industrial Zone, I-L: Light Industrial Zone – Up to \$2,500
- The Mural design must be pre-approved by the City and must be reflective of and consistent with the City’s values and purposes. In the case of representational artworks, an emphasis will be made on the reflection of some aspect of Rahway community/culture within the theme. Further, the design must be appropriate to the setting and architecture of the Site.
- There will be a mechanism for grant reimbursement at a depreciated value if the City funded public art is not maintained or must be/is removed within 10 years of completion.
- **UPDATE: The application is complete. We are finalizing the Owner’s Agreement. Once all are complete, we will begin outreach.**

IV. UPDATE: Social Media and Branding Program

- The City of Rahway, in conjunction with the Rahway Special Improvement District, sponsored a Social Media and Branding Program to help businesses improve their current promotional practices while learning during the process. The program will be awarded to three businesses who will receive social media services, social media training and mentoring, as well as a strategic branding analysis and plan over a six-month period. Services will be carried out by the SID Social Media and Branding Specialist, Heather Dube. The program was open to all current and new brick and mortar businesses in the City of Rahway.
- The first business that is participating is Wet Ticket Brewing. Heather began working with them in May 2024.
- **UPDATE:** After the first two months (May & June), in comparison to the previous two months (March & April):

- the number of accounts reached has increased by 121%, with 54% of those being non-followers meaning they have significantly increased account visibility.
- The number of accounts engaging with comment increased by 121%, including likes, comments, and most importantly shares.
- Planned and carried out a collaborative “Yappy Hour” with Pampered Paws and Pupz Club. All three businesses and customers loved the event, and they plan on repeating the event, potentially once a month weather dependent.
- Owners have both shown commitment to the program by making time for monthly meetings, implementing suggested ideas, improving their own social media understanding and photo taking, facilitating content, and taking initiative to plan additional upcoming events.

V. RECAP: Latin Stroll – Saturday, June 22, 2024

- In collaboration with the Department of Recreation, and NJ Salsa, Rahway hosted its first Latin Stroll on Saturday, June 22nd from 12-7pm. During the event participants strolled their way around downtown Rahway to three different businesses to enjoy music, dancing, and a fun atmosphere.
- NJ Salsa offers Latin dance lessons and social experiences throughout NJ.
- Tickets were available on Eventbrite for \$20. All 120 tickets were sold out before the event.
- The event began outside the Rahway Rec Center with live music from K’ndela Salsa Band. Despite temperatures in the high 90’s, people danced and were ready to enjoy a day of fun in Rahway. The group then strolled to Romero’s Tavern, the Waiting Room and finally the Watt Horel for about two hours of dancing and fun at each stop. Each of the three locations offered food and drink specials to the participants.

VI. Soiree en Blanc on Cherry Street – Sunday, August 25, 2024

- The annual party under the stars on E. Cherry Street will take place on Sunday, August 25th from 7-10pm with a rain date of September 1st.
- Table reservations will go on sale on August 1st. This event has sold out quickly in the past.
- The SID is working with restaurants in the area for specials and pre-fixe menus to encourage people to order food and support our local businesses.

VII. Mayor’s Music Series – Friday & Saturday evenings all summer long

- A mix of returning favorites and new artists will be featured at both venues to create a great atmosphere in downtown Rahway.
- Music at the Paseo takes flight every Friday evening (June-September) from 6:30-9:30pm.
- Arts District Park comes alive with music every Saturday evening (June-September) from 6-8pm.

VIII. Mayor’s Summer Concert Series – Thursdays in August

- Every Thursday from August 1st through August 22nd there will be free performances right in front of the Union County Performing Arts Center at 1601 Irving Street. (Concerts will be moved inside the UCPAC in the event of rain).
- The series kicks off on August 1st at 6:30 PM with an electrifying performance by AB Salute House and is followed by The Amor Prohibido, on August 8th , 24K Magic on August 15th and 112 on August 22nd.

- The SID will again look to feature businesses in the area of UCPAC as well as some from outside the downtown to help visitors and residents get to know our great local businesses.

IX. 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 downtown and create curated areas that will attract residents and visitors to the city to explore all that Rahway has to offer.
 - **UPDATE:** We are working with a Christmas light design company to finalize our décor for the holiday season.
- **Training & Continuing Education Opportunities for Businesses**
 - We have partnered with the Rahway Department of Health to provide ServSafe Food Manager training for our restaurants at a reduced cost to them. This training will take place on June 10th.
UPDATE: 7 people attended the training class at the Rec Center on June 10.
- **Website Revamp**
 - 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.
 - **UPDATE:** We are in the final stages of the overhaul; we had to make some design changes to the business directory, containing over 650 businesses, to allow it to be more user friendly.

X. Ribbon Cuttings

- **Akasa Yoga** – 208 Central Avenue
On June 26th, Mayor Giacobbe, members of the Rahway Chamber of Commerce and the Special Improvement District welcomed Akasa Yoga studio to the City of Rahway. Located at 208 Central Avenue, owner Melanie Gonzalez Kennedy offers a safe place for all to connect their mind, body, soul and heart through the beautiful practice of yoga and strives to bring the community together through movement.