



Rahway Special Improvement District Report

Monday, September 9, 2024

I. **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 from May-October 2024.
- **UPDATE: Quilla by Sabor Peruano is the second business participating in the program and began working with Heather Dube on August 1st.**

II. **Website Revamp**

- The new www.Rahwayishappening.com website has launched with a new look and functionality.
- The site was first created in 2016 and has undergone updates, but this was the first large scale update to the site in eight years.
- Some of the improvements include:
 - Easier to navigate menus,
 - Updated Events Calendar that will allow for businesses to have their events added,
 - Newly organized Business Directory that features business logos (still collecting these from our businesses) and info,
 - A facelift that will give the site a more modern look,
 - The Instagram feed has also been added to the page to highlight all that is happening in Rahway,
 - Behind the scenes enhancements to allow for a better user experience.
- The site went live on July 15th and after a few tweaks and bug fixes, the site is functioning well and has a new look. We are still in the process of creating and curating new content for the site, including more resources for current and prospective business owners.
- We are planning on promoting the new site in September.
- **UPDATE: The Event Calendar page is filling up with both City/SID events and events happening at local businesses. Businesses have submitted these events through our new form and social media.**
- **UPDATE: Early analytics have shown an increase in page views of the site. We will share more information when we have a larger sample size.**

III. **RECAP: Soiree en Blanc on Cherry Street – Sunday, August 25, 2024**

- The annual party under the stars on E. Cherry Street took place on Sunday, August 25th from 7-10pm.
- This year's Soiree had approximately 500 people in attendance. Registration opened on 8/1 and reached the 60-table capacity within hours. For the first time a table fee was charged. \$10 for a 6-foot table and \$15 for an 8-footer. This had no impact on registration. There was a two-table maximum.

- Ms. Rochelle Fleming, lead singer of the 80-90's R&B group, First Choice, closed the evening out with a 20-minute performance. It was very well received.
- The SID worked with restaurants in the area for specials and pre-fixe menus to encourage people to order food and support our local businesses. 5 restaurants offered a discount or prix fixe menu: CubaNu, The Waiting Room, La Chula, Hugo's Restaurant, and Casamon Caribbean Cuisine. **UPDATE: Some of the restaurants saw an uptick in orders due to advertising and promotion to the attendees of the Soiree. We will continue to grow this program.**

IV. 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.
- There are 3 more weeks of music at the Paseo on Friday evenings from 6:30-9:30pm.
- Arts District Park has 2 more shows in September on Saturday evenings from 6-8pm.

V. ArtsFest – Saturday, September 21st from 2-6pm

- ArtsFest is returning to the Arts District on Irving Street after having to move inside due to rain in 2023.
- Currently 59 artists are signed up for the event.
- The performing arts will be on display throughout the day with music, local dance companies, an aerialist and contortionist.
- There will be a cartooning workshop for children, and painting workshops from Art 4 Change and Wine & Design.
- The SID is working with businesses in the area to help them engage the community for the event.

VI. Paint Rahway Pink – October 2024

- This October, the City of Rahway is again looking to Paint Rahway Pink and put a bigger spotlight on Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The goal of the Paint Rahway Pink initiative is to raise awareness about early detection through screenings and to support those who are going through treatments, their families and healthcare providers.
- The Special Improvement District is inviting all of our businesses to create specific pink specials, provide special classes or services, or by decorating store fronts in pink decor for #PaintRahwayPink.
- In its first year (2023), 42 businesses participated in one way or another and we hope again to see a great turnout from the business community.

VII. Hispanic Heritage Month

- The City of Rahway will be celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept 15-Oct 15) with many different events to highlight the contributions and wonderful heritage of our Hispanic residents and business owners. Food is an important part of every cultural and heritage and is often an extension of the people and their history. We want to highlight the unique foods from our Hispanic restaurants while helping people learn about its significance to their culture.
- On Saturday, October 5th & 12th, residents and visitors can take part in our Hispanic Heritage Food Stroll called: *No Sin Mi Bocado!* (Not Without My Small Bites)
- Restaurants will feature small bites unique to the culture or heritage of the restaurant for a small price ranging between \$3-\$7.
- Customers can visit the participating restaurants to sample the foods and to learn about the food or drink of each culture.

VIII. Training & Continuing Education Opportunities for Businesses

- The SID will host a networking event for Hispanic business owners on October 9th from 3-5pm at Cubanu. This event will feature a short presentation from the New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) about the services that they can provide to business owners. There will be time for the SID to answer questions as well and then give people a chance to meet and network.

IX. Small Business Weekend

- The SID and Rahway Chamber of Commerce will once again collaborate on the Shop Local initiative for Small Business Saturday. We have begun meeting to discuss ways to enhance the programs that we already have in place and to add new events and activations.
- 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 and throughout the holiday shopping season.
- To support local artists and creators, we 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 Small Business Saturday from 11am-3pm. 16 vendors participated by selling locally produced, handcrafted products. We intend to expand this program for 2024.

X. 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 new Christmas light design company to finalize our décor for the holiday season.**
 - **In addition to lighting up the**
 - **downtown, there will be new décor designed for photo opportunities. We hope these photo stations can be a draw for people to come visit the downtown and while doing so visit our great businesses.**

XI. 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.
- There were 130 applicants for the BIP. 109 businesses met the established criteria for eligibility. 62 businesses have submitted their funding requests.
- 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.
- **UPDATE: There have been no new funding requests submitted. We are working with the final few businesses to help them complete their projects 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

XII. Facade Improvement Program

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

Update

- o There was a total of 32 applicants for the FIP. 24 applicants met the established criteria for eligibility.
- o 10 property owners are ready to receive funding and are working with SID and UCEDC to finalize paperwork.
- o As of August 1st, 7 property owners have completed the work and received funding.
- o **UPDATE: There have been no new funding requests completed. We are still working with the property owners to assist them with completing their requests.**

XIII. Public Art Incentive Program Amendment to the FIP

- o 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.
- o 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.
- o The Public Art Incentive Program will be funded through the Rahway Special Improvement District or other funding source if and when they become available.
- o 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.
- o 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.
- **UPDATE: The application is complete. We are finalizing the Owner’s Agreement. Once the agreement is complete, we will begin outreach.**

XIV. Ribbon Cuttings

- There were no ribbon cuttings in August, however we have 3-4 scheduled for September.