



# Rahway Special Improvement District Report

## Tuesday, November 12, 2024

### I. Paint Rahway Pink – October 2024

- This October, the City of Rahway's Paint Rahway Pink initiative sought to 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 invited all our businesses to create specific pink specials, provide special classes or services, or by decorating store fronts in pink decor for #PaintRahwayPink.
- This year 45 businesses participated in the Paint Rahway Pink campaign. 26 of them offered special "pink" menu items, deals or specials while others decorated their storefronts in pink, wore pink as a staff, held a special event, or made a donation.
- Participating businesses include:

Adeline Deli & Grocery	Millie & Joy
Alfonso's	Mr. B Printing
Antojitos Salvadoreños Pupuseria	Nancy's Towne House
Arista Yoga	Pampered Paws
Beauty & the Chic	Protein Corner
Bianca's Deli	Pupz Club
Butch Kowal's Tavern	Rahway Best-Tiger Martial Arts
Caido del Cielo	R & J Pizza
Cubanu	Salsa Y Sabor
Delicias	Spanish Restaurant III
Edward Jones	Tasa Teahouse
Garden of Ink	The Coffee Box
Gelber & Associates	The Waiting Room
Gilded Lily	The Watt
Herbs for Life	Travel Skate Shop
Hugo's Restaurant	UCPAC
Irving Inn Social	Vendee Events
Juice Hub	Wholly Cow
La Chula	Wine & Design
La Malinche	Witty's
Liberty Harley	Wizdom Media
Michelino's	

### II. RECAP: Hispanic Heritage Food Stroll: *No Sin Mi Bocado!*

- The City of Rahway is 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 culture 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 5<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>, 12 restaurants took part in our first Hispanic Heritage Food Stroll called: *No Sin Mi Bocado!* (Not Without My Small Bites!)
- Restaurants featured small bites unique to the culture or heritage of the restaurant for a small price ranging between \$3-\$7.

- The event gave people an opportunity to try new restaurants or menu items. Several restaurants set up stations outside their restaurants to capture more attention and create a street food atmosphere. The event was well received by patrons and restaurant owners. We received valuable feedback from the restaurants on how to improve for 2025.
- Restaurants who participated:
  - Adeline Deli - 45 E Milton Ave
  - Alfonso's Catering Services - 952 St. Georges Ave
  - Caido del Cielo - 221 W Main St
  - Cholao El P'tas -1831 Paterson St
  - CubaNu - 1467 Main St
  - Delicias Restaurant - 1524 Irving St
  - Hugo's Peruvian Restaurant - 1505 Main St
  - La Malinche Restaurant - 1588 Irving St
  - La Chula - 78 E Cherry St
  - Mana Spanish Food 2 - 1311 Madison Hill Rd
  - Spanish Restaurant III - 988 St. Georges Ave
  - Quilla by Sabor Peruano - 1576 Irving St

### III. Training & Continuing Education Opportunities for Businesses

- **RECAP: Hispanic Business Owner Networking Event**
  - On October 9<sup>th</sup> from 3-5pm, the SID hosted a networking event for Hispanic business owners at Cubanu. This event featured a short presentation from Anthony Martinez of the New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) about the services that they can provide to business owners.
  - Pablo Varona, co-owner of Cubanu, spoke about his experience of being a longtime business owner in Rahway.
  - There were 35 local business owners in attendance. Everyone had the opportunity to introduce themselves and talk about their business and why they attended the meeting. There was time for people to mingle, connect and enjoy some good food.
  - Anthony Martinez of the New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) reported that at least 10 people in attendance had already reached out to him about resources.
- **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.
  - Quilla by Sabor Peruano is the second business participating in the program and began working with Heather Dube on August 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - **RECAP: Wet Ticket Brewing from May-October 2024**  
Heather Dube reported that at the completion of their 6 months, Wet Ticket:
    - Increased their followers by almost 300
    - Increased their reach to an average of 5,000 accounts per month without using ads

- Increased their utilization of other accounts to maximize audience
- Increased the amount of content generated and maintained consistent posting to keep the account visible
- In addition to the increased visibility through social media, Wet Ticket programmed multiple events that allowed them to collaborate with other local businesses to expand their reach and awareness of their business and the other businesses:
  - Yappy Hour: Collaboration with Pupz Club (Rahway), Pampered Paws (Rahway), Guiding Eyes charity, and Humane Society of Newark
  - Pilates and Pints
  - Sticks and Brews: Collaboration with Sticks Cigars (Rahway) to host a ticketed event in the beer garden
  - Oktoberfest: This was the first Oktoberfest for Wet Ticket and was a huge success. Collaborated on Oktoberfest take-out menu featuring dishes from Nancy's Townhouse, Cubanu, Flynn's, and Irving Social.
- Owners Tim Pewitt and Al Povalski have recognized the benefit of increased exposure through social media and events. They plan to create a position specifically to maintain the new level of expectation.

**IV. RECAP: 2255 Elizabeth Avenue Mural** – completed in August 2024

- The mural features three notable innovators with ties to Rahway, including astrophysicist Carl Sagan, inventor Nikola Tesla, and Merck biochemist Jeannette E. Brown. The design recognizes Rahway's past and future as a place where innovative thinkers can call home. The mural faces the train tracks north of Rahway station. It is visible to NJ Transit and Amtrak riders traveling on the Northeast Corridor between New York City and Rahway.
- On October 25th, Rahway officially unveiled the mural as local dignitaries boarded the NJ TRANSIT train in Linden to view the mural along the rail line. Mayor Raymond A. Giacobbe and Rahway City Council were joined by Assemblywoman Linda Carter (LD22) as well as representatives from NJ TRANSIT, Merck Research Labs, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. Following the unveiling, Mayor Giacobbe shared remarks at the Rahway Train Station in celebration of this exciting merger of technology and art.

**V. Small Business Weekend – November 29<sup>th</sup>-December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- 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.
- We will have 150 giveaway bags for customers who shop at participating Rahway retailers. Shoppers at those businesses will also be able enter a raffle for gift cards to local businesses and the UCPAC.
- We will once again have our Holiday Window Decorating Contest to encourage businesses to get in the spirit of the holiday season and to make Rahway merrier and brighter.
- To support local artists and creators, we are hosting a Holiday Pop-Up Market on Main (1425 Main St) and the Cherry Street Mall (75 E Cherry St).

- The Market on Main will be open on Black Friday (11/29) from 2-8pm to coincide with the Tree Lighting and on Saturday (11/30) from 11-4pm.
- The Market at the Cherry Street Mall will be open on Saturday (11/30) from 11-4pm.

**VI. 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, Holiday Outdoor Décor, for the 2024 holiday season.
  - In addition to lighting up the downtown, there will be new décor designed for photo opportunities at Train Station Plaza and on East Cherry Street (in front of the mural). We hope these photo stations can be a draw for people to come visit the downtown and while doing so visit our great businesses.

**VII. 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.**

<b>Business</b>	<b>Business Address</b>	<b>Total Amount</b>
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 Carriibbean 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

### VIII. 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.
- As of August 1<sup>st</sup>, 7 property owners have completed the work and received funding.
- **UPDATE: There have been no new funding requests completed. We are still working with the property owners to assist them with completing their requests.**

### IX. 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 commercial 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, rights of way, 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 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
- **UPDATE: Quilla by Sabor Peruano was the first applicant of the Public Art Incentive Program. They applied and were approved to begin work on a mural which represents Peruvian culture. This mural will be visible from Irving Street and will be completed in early November. A mural unveiling and dedication will be planned shortly after completion.**

**X. Ribbon Cuttings**

○ **Stanford Angels: Clear Mind and Wellness & Jaiz Quality Home Health Care – 1600 St. Georges Ave, Suite 301**

Realizing 'Everyone needs the chance to reboot', Stanford Angels Clear Mind and Wellness's CEO, Sharon Stanford, was motivated by her own experience to build a great team to provide mental health care to help people regain clarity and make room for an improved life.

○ **Mana Spanish Food 2: 1311 Madison Hill Rd**

Mana, as its name suggests, is a gift from heaven. For 17 years, it has served the Hispanic community of Kearny with traditional Colombian food. They are proud to be here in Rahway and take on the exciting challenge to bring their delicious foods to the community.