



Rahway Special Improvement District Report

Monday, February 10, 2025

I. Soup Stroll - January 4, 11, 18 and 25 from 1-4pm at participating restaurants

- The annual soup sampling event returned to Rahway every Saturday in January
- The event has grown in popularity and draws hundreds of people out to try new restaurants and local favorites. It is a great opportunity for businesses to promote future specials and create new customers.
- This year, 28 restaurants participated throughout the City.
- **UPDATE:** Each of the four weeks approximately 300-400 people visited the downtown restaurants to sample soups.
- In total over 28,000 soup samples were given out, an increase from 20,000 soup samples in 2024.
- We are grateful to the Rahway High School students in the Children Learning About Work (CLAW) Program and their advisers Ms. Evanik and Ms. Romero who helped with putting thousands of stickers on the cups for the event.

II. Restaurant Meetings

- Two meetings were held to bring our restaurant owners together to discuss new initiatives, upcoming events and to network with other owners.
- Meetings were held on February 3rd and February 5th at Hamilton Stage.
- The meeting also gave restaurant owners an opportunity to meet with City officials and to have the opportunity to ask questions.
 - Department of Health Director, Andrea Alvare spoke about upcoming food safety classes and training that will be available.
 - Assistant Municipal Engineer, Kendrick Funes spoke about upcoming projects that will take place in Rahway that will have an effect on businesses

III. Dinner & Show with UCPAC

- After some success in 2024, we are working with UCPAC to expand the marketing of our Dinner & Show initiative.
- Currently 9 restaurants are participating in the Dinner & Show deals, we are hoping to grow that number and expand the options so that there is something for everyone.
- In addition to being promoted on the UCPAC website, we are planning a more robust approach to marketing that will include better signage in the restaurants and around the city.
- On the Rahway is Happening website, the Dinner & Show page is consistently one of the most visited pages with people finding the page via the UCPAC link.
- We are also expanding the program to include a guide to "Where to Go After the Show" that will provide theater goers with options of establishments that are open after the curtains come down.

IV. Women in Business Networking Event – Thursday, March 20 from 6-8pm at Nancy's Townhouse (1453 Main Street)

- This 2-hour meet-up/workshop is dedicated to local Rahway women entrepreneurs
- This yearly event has been well attended and helps to bring our women business owners together to share ideas, network and hopefully gain some knowledge that they can use to grow their business

V. Training & Continuing Education Opportunities for Businesses

○ **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.
- **UPDATE:** Wet Ticket Brewing was the first participating business from May-October 2024, followed by Quilla by Sabor Peruano from August-January. Currently Heather Dube is working with Millie & Joy Boutique.

VI. 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 still working with the final few businesses to help them complete their projects and receive funding. After seeing the success of this program, we plan on launching it again in the future.

VII. 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 1st, 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.

VIII. Ribbon Cuttings

○ **Impressions, Body Solutions - 156 E. Milton Avenue**

Tackling everyday body aches, skin problems and post op recovery to help the natural healing process, owner Terina Jones and her team pride themselves on providing pampered therapy to all.

- **West Carpets - 385 St. Georges Avenue**

On January 10, 2025, Mayor Giacobbe welcomed Jose Melara, the new owner of West Carpets. A long-time employee of the business, Jose is well positioned to continue the reliable service established by the Westerlund Family who have proudly served the community for over 40 years.

- **Dunkin Donuts - 1800 US 1 South**

On February 1, 2025, Mayor Giacobbe, City Council member Joanna Myles and members of the Rahway Chamber of Commerce joined owner Umar Amid to help open the doors at the grand re-opening of this long-standing Rahway establishment after an extensive interior re-model.

- **Fork - 1519 Main Street**

Mayor Giacobbe joined the grand opening celebration and cut the ribbon of downtown Rahway's newest fine dining establishment, Fork on January 30, 2025. Conveniently located within walking distance to the Rahway train station, partners Nicky Sylva and Everest Mulaj did their research to create modern urban appeal and a delicious menu.