

## MDA's Plans for 2017 and Beyond Are Taking Shape

The Metuchen Downtown Alliance may be “building a ship as we sail it,” to borrow a phrase from Executive Director Isaac Kremer, but make no mistake: that ship is moving forward swiftly with an enthusiastic crew and a boatload of ideas about how to make a charming and quaint downtown even better.

Volunteers have organized into task forces to pursue goals such as improving livability and bolstering local public venues, bringing more public artwork to the borough, restoring and capitalizing on historic building facades, filming movies in town, analyzing the local economy to identify unmet demands and recruit desirable businesses and reinvestments, and recommend zoning changes to support the needs of an evolving and thriving community.

Chairs of various teams and task forces are busy producing work plans for the second half of 2017 and all of 2018. Common to most of the plans are some of the shared values that are a hallmark of Metuchen, such as environmental sustainability, historical preservation, cultural appreciation and inclusivity.

If there is something you'd like to see happen downtown and included in the plans, please contact the MDA. Hop aboard the ship!



## Market Assessment Reveals Opportunities for MDA Businesses

Although still in progress, an MDA-commissioned market assessment already suggests new ways for Metuchen's businesses to think about local market opportunities.

Psychographic data — which captures people's values, attitudes, interests and lifestyles — finds that those in and within 10 minutes of Metuchen tend to be savvy consumers willing to pay for quality.

They prize attractiveness and cleanliness in the shops they patronize, and they like destination stores.

They're attracted to natural and organic products, and are environmentally aware. Sport- and exercise-focused, many invest heavily in equipment for that purpose. Avid readers and moviegoers, they listen to a wide variety of music, and care about the cultural amenities a community provides. Many like to cook and enjoy good food, wine and a great cup of coffee. Gardening and home remodeling are priorities.

A sales-void analysis identifying potential retail gaps lines up with these preferences. Though just about everything can be obtained within a 10-minute drive time from the borough, some categories are underserved in the immediate vicinity. Strong retail offerings could attract buyers of home furnishings, lawn/garden, clothing, sporting goods, books, hobby and music, office and stationery, gifts and used merchandise.

The market assessment will conclude in May. Look for more actionable insights for the MDA then.



Classic-car Cruise Nights start again on May 3.

## Designs for a New Metuchen

The MDA has hired consultant Dave Kyu to develop a first draft of a public art policy to include criteria for the selection of public art as well as a policy for the artists' project applications.

His first site visit was on April 1, when he was given a tour of the district, met with members of the task force and gave a presentation on what types of art to consider. He will deliver a policy draft by June 15 with recommendations for next steps.

## Spring Planting

The Garden Club completed its first batch of spring plantings in late March. A more extensive planting is scheduled for May 24, when the Senior Center parking lot will be used for a staging area for volunteers. About 10 volunteers are need, so please contact the MDA office if interested in helping out. The MDA is buying pots to match those being purchased by the Woodmont apartment complex and plaza, with a total of 50 pots now planned.

## About the MDA:

The Metuchen Downtown Alliance represents 256 business owners and 89 property owners and inspired 3,500 volunteer hours in 2016. Visit [DowntownMetuchen.org](http://DowntownMetuchen.org) for more info. information.

## Social Marketing

The MDA encourages downtown businesses to:

- \*Keep their social-media accounts active because these feed automatically into the MDA's website and help to keep volunteers apprised of events, specials and other news.

- \*Participate in promotions and create their own materials for new customers that may visit their business during promotion periods. This could include: menu items, specialty services, coupons for future visits, etc.

- \*Create Facebook events for any special events and/or promotions. This not only helps keep social-media accounts active (and sets reminders for those interested), but also helps the MDA carry over events into its online calendar.

## May Promotions

**Mother's Day:** Businesses are encouraged to send the MDA details of any Mother's Day offers and specials (restaurants, services, retailers, beauty salons, etc.)

**Get Your Prom On:** Please send the MDA details on specials about for prom season. See [downtown.metuchen.org](http://downtown.metuchen.org) for more info.



## Downtown TakeOver: Kids Edition

On Wednesday, June 21, from 1pm to 6pm, Metuchen will hold a "Downtown Takeover — Kids Edition."

Businesses are encouraged to be "kid friendly" during these hours. Restaurants should consider kids' size portions, meal options and/or kids-eat-free specials as well as activities and games for children.

There will also be a People in My Neighborhood scavenger hunt. Tell the MDA a fun fact about you business or employees who will be on staff on June 21 from 1pm to 6pm. Children will receive a scavenger hunt sheet and be asked to learn information about business owners in their neighborhood.

Please email the MDA at [info@downtownmetuchen.org](mailto:info@downtownmetuchen.org) with any special events or offers for this "takeover."

## Father's Day and Graduation Promotions Planned for June

**Father's Day:** Businesses are encouraged to send the MDA details on any Father's Day offers and specials (gift certificates, discounts, etc.)

**Graduation Specials:** Businesses are encouraged to send the MDA details or specials for any graduation or teacher gift ideas.

**Live Fit Metuchen:** This will be held on Saturday, June 24, and be led by Bob Matland of Black Belt Institute. The event will showcase fitness studios and health-based businesses.



Live Fit will promote BlackBelt Institute, other fitness businesses

**JuneBug (Saturdays in June):** Note this is a Metuchen Chamber of Commerce event and any specific questions about the event itself should be directed to the Chamber.

Please let the MDA know if your business would consider giving 10% off for customers wearing a 2017 JuneBug T-shirt during the month of June (dine-in only).

Restaurants are also encouraged to create grab-and-go menu items for \$10, \$15 and/or \$20 price points including tax. These grab-and-go options would be advertised with participating artists and vendors and would also be handed out at JuneBug. Please email the MDA with any specials you would like to promote.