

MDA’s Legions of Volunteers Reorganized Into Teams With Focused Goals for Borough

The structure of the MDA and how it organizes volunteers is changing in order to build alignment with our Vision and Transformation Strategies. Volunteers will be organized into teams to create a sense of shared purpose in support of our goals. Below are how the new teams will be organized. Contact the MDA to find out how to get involved.

Communications Team: Will coordinate communications with other teams to pursue an integrated media strategy.

Innovation Team: Will build on Metuchen’s heritage of independent, creative people to cultivate innovative and unique small businesses, entrepreneurs, and artists.

Tech Team: Will work directly with existing merchants who want to expand their online commercial presence and add online sales channels.

Creative Team: Will bring new ideas and innovations to existing businesses that help their businesses and revenues grow.

Recruitment Team: Will create recruitment packages, recruit new businesses and coordinate with the Family Friendly Team.

Storefront Team: Will work with the Borough to implement a Storefront Improvement Matching Grant Program in 2018.

Facade & Historic Preservation Team: Complete downtown design guidelines in 2017 and present workshops with property owners and merchants

about how the design guidelines work in 2018.

Family Friendly Team: Will help foster a regional destination for families and kids where something fun, new, and exciting is always happening.

Forum Theater Team: Will work on feasibility studies and a business plan for the restoration of the Forum Theater into an active multi-functional theater.

Town Plaza Team: Will manage and program concerts, movie screenings, theater events at the plaza year-round. Raise funds to equip and activate the new Town Plaza with amenities including theatrical lighting, sound equipment, projection capability.

Getting It Done Team: Name says it all! Will identify everything else that needs to happen for the MDA to achieve success.

Investor Campaign Team: Will seek additional financial support from families, businesses, and property owners.

Zoning Team: Will review current downtown zoning, partner with Borough to ensure proper zoning to permit quality businesses.

Parking Team: Will work with Borough, Metuchen Parking Authority, and others to ensure there is adequate and convenient parking.

Public Art Team: Will work with the public art consultant and Metuchen Arts Council to identify projects and develop work plans for implementation based on consultant’s report.



Promotions Are in the Works for Fall

The MDA is working on the following promotions for the fall. Merchants and businesses are encouraged to keep abreast of promotions and participate when appropriate. See downtownmetuchen.org for more information on how you can get involved.

Back to School with Boyt’s – Visit Boyt Drugs for back to school boxes for Campbell Elementary School. Boyt’s has the school supply list for each grade and 10% of the total sales will be donated to the Moss/Campbell PTO.

Haunted Downtown – A spooktakular event in Downtown Metuchen to celebrate Halloween on Saturday October 28. (See advertisement on back for more information.)

Hop, Skip & Jump into Downtown – With Whole Foods opening in October, bringing shoppers from throughout central NJ to Metuchen, the MDA wants to remind visitors that everything in Downtown Metuchen is just a hop, skip and jump away through this promotion which will encourage shoppers to visit ALL of Downtown.



Population and Income Growth Increase Sales Potential

The MDA-commissioned market analysis looked at population and income trends in our market and calculated their potential value to businesses. The study reports modest population growth (6.7 percent from 2010 to 2020), but the percent of Metuchen households with children under 18 increasing from 20.8 percent to 23.7 percent.

In addition, median household income of Metuchen residents increased by 19.7 percent from between 2010-2015 (the most recent

year for which Census/American Community Survey data is available), far outpacing the rate of median household income growth in Middlesex County (2.5 percent), the State of New Jersey (3.3 percent), and the US (3.8 percent).

As the population grows, demand for products and services also grows, and increasing incomes support greater consumption. Our market analysis consultant estimated that: “at Metuchen’s current average household income level, each new

household the community attracts will generate \$3,757 in demand for groceries, \$2,564 for restaurant meals, \$1,327 for furniture and home furnishings, \$596 for housekeeping supplies, \$1,482 for apparel and apparel-related services, \$1,312 for health care (not including health insurance), \$2,548 for entertainment, \$542 for personal care products and services, and \$90 for reading materials.”

How is your business readying itself to capture some of those dollars?



FROM THE STRATEGIC PLAN: The Main Street Approach revolves around what’s known as “the Four Points,” which correspond with the four elements of real estate value - Physical, Economic, Social, and Civic.

MDA Finalizes Strategic Plan

The MDA has finalized its 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, an expansive vision and preferred future for the downtown over the next five years. The strategy follows the Main Street Approach, which aims to maximize the economic potential of each historic downtown while preserving its authentic character.

All MDA stakeholders, including residents, business owners, partners, and property owners, participated in the research leading up to the creation of the MDA’s first 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. It sets out the following vision for the district:

We envision a welcoming, walkable, and inclusive downtown. Engaging public art, entertainment, and recreation abound throughout our historic and vibrant downtown. All residents and visitors will be brought together by daily and special downtown experiences at destinations, independent businesses, and restaurants featuring personalized customer service.

And, to achieve that vision, it defines two key strategies that will drive the work of the MDA going forward. The first – a family-friendly strategy—emphasizes the district’s attractiveness to families and kids and envisions Metuchen as a convenient regional destination where something fun, new and exciting is always happening.

The second – an innovation strategy—builds on Metuchen’s heritage of independent, creative people and focuses on cultivating innovative and unique small businesses, entrepreneurs, and artists.

The plan details goals and tasks for each strategy, and will inform the MDA’s continuing work in marketing, business recruitment, streetscape beautification, public art, programs and events.

Contact MDA Executive Director Isaac Kremer for a copy of the full 25-page strategic plan as well as shopper-survey and market analysis documents that helped inform it. isaac@downtownmetuchen.org.

MDA Receives Grant for Placemaking on Lake Ave.

The MDA is one of only 10 selected Main Street America organizations to receive matching grant funds toward the implementation of “lighter, quicker, cheaper” placemaking projects. Participants in this program are connected to the crowdfunding experts at ioby (www.ioby.org), who share training materials and deliver customized one-on-one fundraising support.

The MDA will work with businesses at 335 Lake Ave., where rehabilitation of the building is underway, to create a cool public gathering space perfect for families and kids.

Funds will be used to outfit this space with movable chairs and tables. Garden lights overhead will add to the ambiance. Games for families and kids will be incorporated so there is something for people of every age to do.

“The process of building the place itself will engage diverse partners including public officials, downtown businesses, our Main Street volunteers, and the general public,” MDA Executive Director Isaac Kremer said.

At the end of the initial build in September, a community gathering and meal will be held to show off the work. With this project, MDA will demonstrate a process for creating quick and low-cost improvements downtown.

The MDA will seek to transform additional spaces throughout the downtown.

Read more about this project and the other Edward Jones Placemaking on Main Crowdfunding Challenge participating projects here: www.ioby.org/edwardjonesplacemaking

Addams Family Taking Residency in Metuchen

The Addams Family, a new musical comedy, is coming to the Forum Theater from October 13 -31! The show will run on Thursdays at 7:30pm, Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm, with Sunday matinees at 2pm. Specially Halloween shows will be on Monday, Oct. 30, at 7:30 p.m. and Tuesday, Oct. 31, at 7:30. See www.forumarts.net/shows for more information and to purchases tickets online. Box Office: 732.548.5600.

Notes from the MDA’s Teams

Historic Preservation – Nancy Zerbe has collected copies of old photos of historic facades on Main Street from the Historical Society and is deciding which properties to focus on to stimulate interest in restoration. Nancy is also reviewing the Main Street New Jersey Design Guidelines for adoption by Metuchen. She plans to meet with the MDA’s consultant to discuss best practices strategies.

Public Art - Laura Griffith just received the final draft of a public art policy from the MDA’s public-art consultant. The policy includes program and administration recommendations for public art projects and artist applications. The next step, after the policy is in place, is to zero in on a small project that could take shape before the end of the fiscal year.

Holiday Decorations – Globes and light strands were ordered to extend the holiday lighting in the district for this coming December. The MDA is looking to extend the lighting down New Street to Lake Avenue and up and down Pearl Street.

About Metuchen Downtown Alliance:

The Metuchen Downtown Alliance is a volunteer-based, non-profit downtown management corporation dedicated to the management and revitalization of the designated Metuchen business district in partnership with stakeholders, residents, municipal government and other partners.

Learn more about us at: www.downtownmetuchen.org/

Dewey Discount System

September is Library Card Sign-up Month. The Metuchen Public Library has partnered with local businesses to reward library cardholders with discounts, savings, and special offers. All you have to do is show your Metuchen Public Library Card to get special deals at local businesses for the entire month of September. See downtownmetuchen.org for information on more than two dozen discounts.

Educate Yourself on Parking Policies

Convenient parking is the lifeblood of commerce in a town like Metuchen. Consider the fact that a single parking spot in the Borough’s downtown that doesn’t turn over is equal to an estimated \$27,000 in lost annual revenue for local businesses.

The MDA does not set parking rules for downtown — that’s done by the Borough government. However, the MDA urges members to educate themselves about the updated policies in order to ensure their customers, clients and visitors have the best possible experience in Metuchen.

So please be advised that the Metuchen Parking Authority has begun to issue warnings as a precursor to enforcing parking regulations in the downtown area. MDA supports enforcement as a means to create more turnover of spaces in the downtown area, which in turns allows more customers to park.

The goal of the MDA Parking Team is to have short-term, on-street parking (less than one hour) and medium-term parking (one to three hours) in the New Street lot and the Pearl Street parking deck.

Please also note that as of August 31 there is no longer automatic free parking in the deck. Starting September 1, those businesses registered with Nexus will be able to provide three hours of parking in the deck at no cost to customers by validating. Anyone who is interested in applying to be able to validate parking for their customers should go to metuchenparking.com and select Merchant Web Validation Application. All downtown merchants and offices are welcome.

Estimated yearly revenue lost from a parking space that doesn’t turn over:

\$27,000

