

DOWNTOWN METUCHEN

explore · experience · enjoy

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE

2024 BOARD & VOLUNTEER TEAMS

2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Organization Team

Promotion Team

Communications Team

Design Team

Public Art Team

Economic Vitality Team

STAFF

Dawn Mackey, Executive Director

METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE

MISSION AND VISION

MISSION STATEMENT

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

Vision Statement

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.

WELCOME!

January 30, 2025

Dear MDA Stakeholders,

Once again it is my privilege to have spent this past year as executive director of the Metuchen Downtown Alliance. We started the year strong, being named Best Destination in 2024 by NJ Best Magazine and then Best Place to Live by Money Magazine in March. These accolades are born of the tireless work by a phenomenal group of dedicated volunteers, in partnership and in service to you, our property and business owners. They create opportunities to promote what we already know locally- (Metuchen is a great place to shop, dine and live) to a new audience, introducing new customers to the Borough. I firmly believe that if you come to Metuchen once, you will return again and again.

We continue to work closely with the Borough and collaborate on many issues, including edits to the parking plan, a second successful Mayor's Concert Series, expanded Metuchen Lights and public art. We continue to focus on inclusive events and prioritize movement into businesses. We had another interactive and robust holiday season - kicked off a week early with a Holiday Homecoming in Peterson Park. This coincided with our holiday lights going on early as well to maximize the benefit to the merchants and restaurateurs.

We successfully applied for several grants and provided several significant beautification projects for the district. And importantly we attracted new, interesting businesses and had others waiting for a space. I am pleased to have earned the trust of several property owners which has allowed me a chance to curate a healthy mix for a sustainable Downtown which includes courting and placing Yestercades- knowing that experiences are a critical component in the ever changing Main Street World.

In furtherance of that pursuit, I completed a rigorous and accelerated course load, earning my MSARP at the Main Street Conference in Alabama. This is the highest level of professional accreditation in the field and makes me only the 2nd person in New Jersey to achieve it. It is critical in these times to maintain continued education to best serve the stakeholders and I am personally committed to this as is the organization as a whole.

This summer we hosted our first resource fair and welcomed the NJEDA staff to enlighten the business owners with the types of support available to them. From grants to reimburse for rent, improvements to the building to website development support, 30 plus businesses attended and we have multiple applications in at this time. Tonight we welcome David Sorkin of New Frontier to educate us on how his company can support you at no cost through one of these grants.

In the fall we were visited by Main Street America professionals to audit our District and organization. While they gave us excellent suggestions for continued success and sustainability- the overall feedback was enthusiastic disbelief that a tiny young organization was having such an incredible impact.

Moving forward we will continue to learn, elevate our district and welcome residents and visitors to a Downtown that is welcoming, diverse and full of surprises.

Thank you,

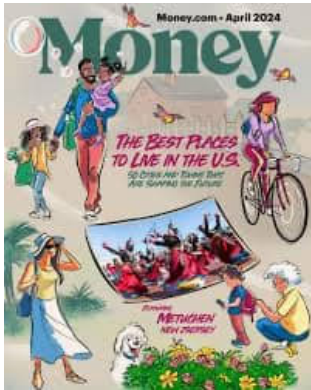
Dawn Mackey

Executive Director
Metuchen Downtown Alliance

NOTEWORTHY

Money Magazine - Best Place to Live

2024 NJ BEST DESTINATION OF THE YEAR



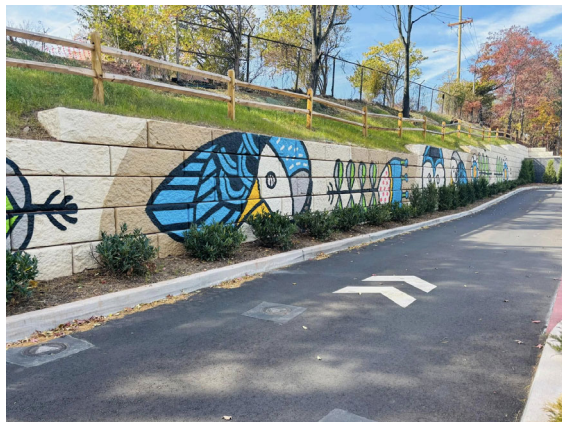
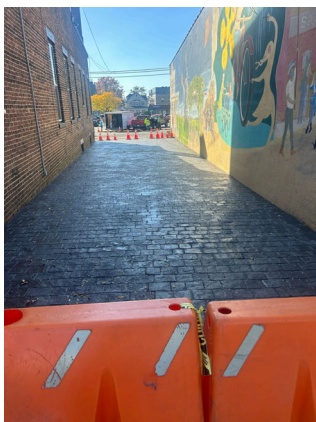
GRANTS

MIDDLESEX COUNTY ARTS AND CULTURE GRANT

The MDA received a \$7000 grant to help fund a mural 'I Went to the Woods' by RH Doaz at Starbucks supplemented by the owner and the MDA.

Middlesex County also provided cultural support in the gift of a commission by artist Julia Win who completed and installed her work 'preSERVE' at 16 Pearl Street made of recycled materials. This project was accompanied by a community art exhibit thanks to property owner Peter Klein.

MSNJ Grant in the amount of \$140,000 which helped fund a second alleyway project on Main Street - providing a new cobblestone stamped concrete floor in Imagination Alley. The grant also provided the new 'Simply The Best' mural (refer to Public Art), post covid enhancements at The Greek on Main, Torino 2, and a project to light the 17 trees on and around the Plaza.



PUBLIC ART

Murals



The Sculpture Project

In 2023 the MDA began working with the Seward Johnson Foundation and in collaboration with the Borough, the MDA curated the first 3 sculptures to encourage pedestrian circulation throughout the Downtown. We partnered with the Borough and added 5 more for 2024. The lease term is up, the sculptures have gone but we retained Marilyn outside the Forum for at least the year.



PROMOTIONS

In 2024, the MDA hosted over 10 big events. Each one with a tie-in with local businesses as a way for visitors to explore, experience and enjoy Metuchen. We added a new premier event 'Metuchen Pops' featuring over 20 pop artists creating throughout Town sponsored by Atlantic Health Systems.



PLACEMAKING

The MDA offered matching grants for Storefront refreshes, relocation and Blade Signs



PARKING

In 2023 we worked with the Borough, Parking Authority and Nexus and advocated for changes to better support the business district. A stakeholder survey was sent out in 2024 and tweaks were incorporated based on user feedback. This included the addition of additional 15 minute spots, upgrades to the parking meters and research into a more user friendly platform which will be unveiled this year.

Also for the first time, the Borough granted the district free metered holiday parking from mid December through New Year's Day. This was met with gratitude from both merchants and shoppers.



RIBBON CUTTINGS/NEW BUSINESS OPENINGS

Yestercades Arcade- 442 Main Street

Aria Nail Salon - 287 Main Street

Be My Guest (Moved and Expanded) - 215 Station Place

Lenoy Med Spa - 326 Main Street

Rising Heart Studio - 323 Main Street

KB Kitchen, Bath & Beyond (opened w/o ribbon cutting) - 407 Main Street

Ram and Rooster - 83 Central Avenue

Mindful Connections - 339 Main Street

Pastry Lu - 457B Main Street

Khorasan Kabob- 567 Middlesex Avenue

Woof Gang Bakery - 349 Lake Avenue

Antonios (under new owners) - 453 Main Street

Media Reach

MDA website

Unique Vistors	Page views
56k	125k

facebook

Views	Reach
920k	329k



Instagram

Views	Reach
557k	166k

The Star-Ledger

Circ.
60k

08840 Magazine

Circ.
6k

Discover Middlesex
Magazine

Circ.
60k



DIGITAL
MARKETING

Imp.
600k