

2007 Annual Report of The Ardmore Initiative (Ardmore Business District Authority)

2007 was both a sad and exciting year for The Ardmore Initiative. It began sadly with the sudden illness & leave of absence of Executive Director Moira Shaughnessy. It also saw the resignation of one of the founders and longtime leader of the Ardmore Business District Authority, Charlie Ward. Other Board members whose terms expired in 2007 include Marty Phillips, Scott Lustgarten and Anthony Costa and we thank them for their many years of service to our community. In response to this adversity, and as a tribute to Charlie's leadership & vision, The Ardmore Initiative emerged as a newly energized and committed organization. At our annual retreat in June, we selected a new slate of Officers: Mike Silver as Chair, Michael Coughlan as Vice-Chair, Larry Gee as Secretary, and Brett Swain as Treasurer. These officers were elected by unanimous vote of the Board at the July meeting. Christine Vilardo, who served as acting Executive Director beginning in January, was appointed as the permanent Director in May. 2007 was a year of healing for the Ardmore community and the beginning of improved relations among the many Ardmore stakeholders. The Initiative cooperated with community groups to host a successful fundraiser for Moira Shaughnessy in March and continues to participate in the Township AdHoc Ardmore Revitalization committee. 2007 saw 15 new businesses start up or relocate within the business district and 11 businesses leave. Property and business owners also invested over \$1,400,000 in property improvements.

The many accomplishments of The Ardmore Initiative committees and staff in 2007 include:

Design Committee:

1. Creation of a Renovation Assistance Handbook to be used as a tool for new or existing business and property owners to help navigate the Township's regulations and permit processes.
2. In cooperation with Lower Merion Township, with funds from Pa. Department of Community & Economic Development, The Design Committee awarded Facade Improvement Grants totaling close to \$25,000 to Orion Construction, Vito Cilluffo, Ardmore Eye Care, Janice Martin, and Giannini Jewelers. In addition, \$20,000 grant awards (with funds from Montgomery County Revitalization Program) are pending to Jr. League Thrift Shop, Human Zoom, Radio Shack building, Pennywise Thrift Shop.

Streetscape:

1. The Streetscape Committee introduced Ardmore Blossoms, a downtown beautification project which placed seasonal flowers on many of our downtown sidewalks, planted close to 1000 tulip & daffodil bulbs which will ensure a vibrant & colorful Springtime in Ardmore.
2. The Green (sidewalk cleaning) Machine was placed back into regular operation. We have also used Community service workers to remove graffiti & provide additional street cleaning services.
3. We applied for and received a grant to purchase and install 12 ash urn receptacles to help keep our downtown cigarette-litter-free.

4. The Ardmore Initiative placed a Holiday Tree and dreidel in Schuffele Plaza (courtesy of Shreiner's Tree Care Service and The Law Firm of Silver and Silver) and once again installed snowflake & tree lighting for the holiday season & purchased additional Ardmore A lights to further brand our downtown. These lights will be installed when the Snowflake lights are removed in March, 2008. Additionally, The Initiative subsidized the cost of additional perimeter building lights on approximately 8 buildings.
5. Five new benches were ordered and will be installed in early 2008. Additionally, graffiti was removed from a number of benches in our downtown.

Marketing:

1. Committee and staff published an updated Restaurant Guide and instituted the sending of monthly E-newsletters to keep our community informed.
2. The Initiative hosted a series of Open Houses in the Fall to invite property and business owners to our new office space and to inform the community of the progress of the Ardmore Transit Center/Revitalization project.
3. We have provided substantial financial and administrative support to First Friday Main Line, a monthly arts event which results in increased foot traffic in our downtown.
4. The Ardmore Initiative web site, www.theardmoreinitiative.org was redesigned courtesy of SwainTechs. This dynamic new site is more representative of the character of our town and will allow the Initiative to more effectively promote our downtown and disseminate information to our stakeholders.

Other:

1. The fifth annual "Ardmore Swings" Golf Outing fundraiser netted approximately \$40,000. Once again, the Initiative made substantial contributions to both the police and fire companies. In addition, Charlie Ward was the guest of honor at the golf outing dinner & we announced the creation of the Charles F Ward Distinguished Service to Ardmore Award.
2. The Board and committee members of The Ardmore Initiative donated 565 volunteers hours toward the improvement of the Ardmore Business District.
3. The Executive Committee in concert with the entire Board worked to shape the RFP for the Ardmore Transit Center/Downtown Revitalization project and continues to represent the interests of the business and property owners to Lower Merion Township.