

2008 Annual Report of The Ardmore Initiative (Ardmore Business District Authority)

History & Mission of The Ardmore Business District Authority

In September, 1993, Lower Merion Township established the Ardmore Business District Authority as a special assessment district according to the provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Act of 1945. This followed a successful three-year Main Street program (1990-1993) wherein a long-range planning process determined the continued improvements and programs desired by business and property owners within the district. The Authority was approved for five years in 1993, and renewed for additional 5 year terms in 1998 and 2003. In 2008, Ardmore commercial property owners once again granted the continuation of the Ardmore Business District Authority (Ardmore Initiative) until 2013.

As a Business District Authority, our mission is to promote the economic vitality of property and business owners in the downtown commercial district. The Ardmore BDA is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of 11-17 members. Board members are nominated by the Authority and appointed by the Lower Merion Township Board of Commissioners. Day to day operations are coordinated by the Executive Director.

Following Our Five Year Plan: Goals for the next five years and 2008 accomplishments towards those goals follow.

Organization

Goals:

- Create a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation which will aid in securing more grants for improvements within the district.
- Create an Advisory Board whose input will assist us in planning and fundraising.
- Negotiate financial commitments from current partners such as Lower Merion Township and the Pa. Department of Community and Economic Development

2008 Accomplishments:

- Our 2008 Reauthorization was accomplished through strong communication with our stakeholders and was the first in which we received no objections. We communicated with our stakeholders in print, via survey and with public and individual information sessions to inform our stakeholders of our activities, to listen to their concerns and to gather input to assist us in setting priorities for the next 5 years.
- We welcomed new Board members John Iannacone, Peter Monaghan, John Durso, Anna Durbin, and Joseph Stefankiewicz.
- We secured a \$10,000 commitment from Lower Merion Township; from DCED we received a \$100,000 New Communities grant for Planning, Marketing, Streetscape and Façade Improvement programs, a \$10,000 Community Revitalization grant for Streetscape amenities, and a \$5000 grant for Ardmore Blossoms beautification activities. The sixth annual "Ardmore Swings" Golf Outing fundraiser netted \$33,000. Once again, the Initiative made substantial contributions to both the police and fire companies. At this event we recognized Nancy Gold of King's Collar Shirtmakers as the winner of the first Charles F. Ward Distinguished Service to Ardmore Award. Sherry Tillman of Past*Present*Future received the Community Energizer Award. Jr. League Thrift Shop and architect Jeff Martin of JTA Associates received the Community Bright Spot Award.
- We began the process of creating a new non-profit organization, The Ardmore Community Development Fund.
- The Board and committee members of The Ardmore Initiative donated over 850 volunteer hours toward the improvement of the Ardmore Business District.
- 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.

Design

Goals:

- Continue to assist building and business owners in revitalizing their properties and work with Township, County, and State Governments to secure and maximize all available grant dollars for existing programs.
- Assist property owners with the façade grant application and guide them through the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) approval process.
- Encourage and educate property and business owners on the use of energy-efficient, eco-friendly building materials and products and pursue available grants for property owners to use to increase their building's energy efficiency.

2008 Accomplishments:

- We placed a HARB member on our Design Committee and advocated successfully with HARB on behalf of our property and building owners.
- With funds from Pa. Department of Community & Economic Development, The Design Committee awarded Façade Improvement Grants totaling close to \$25,000 to Giannini Jewelry, Rae & Co., Ardmore Eye Care, Cookie Cutters Anthony C. and Company, Nurture, Ardmore Computer. A la Maison, Walter Brusch 42 Rittenhouse Place, Petunias Consignment Boutique

- We assisted LMT in administering/awarding \$20,000 façade improvement grants (funded by Montgomery County Revitalization Program) to JR Monaghan's, Pennywise Thrift Store, Jr League Thrift Store, Human Zoom

Streetscape

Goals:

- Continue to improve the appearance of the business district through the Ardmore Blossoms beautification project, including maintenance of Schaufele Plaza, sidewalk flower pots, and flower and tree beds.
- Continue to install sidewalk benches throughout the district.
- Expand participation in holiday perimeter building lighting, and convert all downtown lighting to energy efficient and cost effective LED lighting.
- Continue to improve the cleanliness of the business district with targeted sidewalk cleaning and with installation and replacement of trash receptacles and ash urns as needed.

2008 Accomplishments:

- The Streetscape Committee continued & expanded Ardmore Blossoms, a downtown beautification project which placed, maintained, and watered seasonal flowers in over 50 downtown flower pots; we also planted close to 1000 tulip & daffodil bulbs in downtown flower beds.
- The Green (sidewalk cleaning) Machine was placed back into regular operation.
- We applied for and received a grant from Keep America Beautiful to purchase and install 14 ash urn receptacles to help keep our downtown cigarette-litter-free.
- The Ardmore Initiative placed a Holiday Tree and dreidel, and lit the trees in Schaufele Plaza, once again installed 68 snowflake lights for the holiday season and increased holiday building lighting for a total of 20 downtown buildings aglow for the holiday season.

Marketing and Promotions

Goals:

- Increase regular communications with stakeholders and continue to promote businesses via web site and expanded distribution of business directories and guides.
- Improve the parking experience for shoppers by creating maps of existing parking in addition to working with the township to provide more visible signage for parking.
- Support businesses during redevelopment and construction by increasing marketing activities.

2008 Accomplishments:

- We instituted the sending of monthly E-newsletters to keep our community informed and hosted a series of Open Houses/Round Table events throughout the year for discussions and information sharing sessions with our property and business owners.
- We continue to provide administrative support to First Friday Main Line, a monthly arts event which results in increased foot traffic in our downtown.
- The Ardmore Initiative web site, www.theardmoreinitiative.org 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.

Business Recruitment and Retention

Goals

- Strengthen the shopper destination by creating an incentive program for building owners and real estate agents to bring desirable retailers into existing downtown buildings, and seek funds for interior fit-outs of these properties by strong retail tenants.
- Increase pedestrian traffic and store visits by attracting stores that will bring a larger share of multiple destination shoppers.
- Seek funding for ADA accessibility renovations.

2008 Accomplishments:

- 2008 saw 68 new business start ups/ relocations/ improvements within the business district and 7 businesses leave.
- Property and business owners invested over \$3,211,000 of private dollars in property improvements. There was \$37,440 of public investment in buildings and \$97,938 of public investment in public spaces
- Ardmore and the Ardmore Initiative were recognized by the Pa. Downtown Center as one of the top ten performing Main Street programs in the state in the areas of: Overall Performance by a Main Street program (#7 of 84 programs reporting), total dollars invested in Façade Improvements, and Ratio of private to public dollars invested.