

## **2009 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 2009 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

#### **2009 Accomplishments:**

- We created and incorporated, The Ardmore Community Development Fund which was awarded IRS tax exempt status as a 501C3 non-profit organization. This will allow us to apply for corporate and foundation grants which require 501C3 designation.
- We administered a \$100,000 New Communities grant for Planning, Marketing, Streetscape and Façade Improvement programs, and a \$5000 grant for Ardmore Blossoms beautification activities from DCED.
- 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
- The Board and committee members of The Ardmore Initiative donated over 1200 volunteer hours toward the improvement of the Ardmore Business District.
- The Executive Committee in concert with the entire Board continues to work on the Ardmore Transit Center/Downtown Revitalization project and to represent the interests of the business and property owners to Lower Merion Township and Dranoff Properties.

### **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.

#### **2009 Accomplishments:**

- With funds from Pa. Department of Community & Economic Development, The Design Committee awarded Façade Improvement Grants totaling close to \$16,000 to Jay Pennepacker for Merrick Apothecary, 24 W Lancaster Associates, Walter Brutsch for 42 Rittenhouse Place, Darlene Moseng for A La Maison,
- We assisted LMT in administering/awarding \$20,000 façade improvement grants (funded by Montgomery County Revitalization Program) to Mapes Toys, Sabrina Ann Once Worn Never Worn Bridal, and John Phelan for 9 E. Lancaster Ave.

### **Streetscape/Parking**

#### **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.

#### **2009 Accomplishments:**

- The Streetscape Committee administers Ardmore Blossoms, a downtown beautification project which maintains flower and tree beds and places, maintains, and waters seasonal flowers in over 50 downtown flower pots.
- We continued our regular sidewalk cleaning.
- The Ardmore Initiative once again installed 68 snowflake lights for the holiday season and increased holiday building lighting for a total of 21 downtown buildings aglow for the holiday season.
- In partnership with Lower Merion Township, we placed 6 meter hitches to allow for secure bicycle parking in select downtown locations.
- We began a project to install additional parking signage. In addition we distributed parking maps to our merchants, to visitors, and online.
- We began a “We make change for meters” campaign to encourage merchants to welcome and assist shoppers with change for meters. In addition, on several occasions throughout the year, we sent Ardmore Ambassadors out to feed expired meters & leave notes reminding shoppers of parking rules, regulations & locations.

#### **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.

##### **2009 Accomplishments:**

- We began shooting short videos of our merchants which we will stream on You Tube.
- We ran weekly ads in Main Line Times promoting downtown Ardmore, our events, and our merchants.
- We produced a Main Line Today magazine Community Spotlight on Ardmore and, in addition to the Main Line Today subscriber base, we distributed 1500 copies to shoppers and visitors.
- We underwrote merchant ads in the supplement and in the Main Line Times
- We hosted a series of Round Table events of interest: Retailer Roundtable, Bankers’ Breakfast, Brokers’ Breakfast and a first-ever Leadership Luncheon to communicate our activities and news of interest to our stakeholders.
- We became a “Classic Town”. The Classic Towns program of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission was created to preserve and promote the character of small towns in and around the Delaware Valley.
- We produced the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Ardmore Blossoms community celebration which brought hundreds of shoppers & visitors to the downtown. We continued the popular electronics recycling, shredding, plant exchange and collection drives. For 2009 we added children’s activities and invited local non-profit organizations to participate.
- We produced a first-ever “Taste of Ardmore Food & Fashion” event, presented by Dranoff Properties, held at Ardmore Toyota on Nov. 5, 2009. This sold-out event raised over \$20,000 to support the work of the Ardmore Initiative and showcased the many fine restaurants and retailers of Downtown Ardmore and Suburban Square.
- We co-produced the annual Holiday Tree Lighting and Santa’s arrival.
- In addition to our quarterly print newsletters, we instituted the sending of semi-monthly E-newsletters to keep our community informed.
- We continue to provide administrative support to First Friday Main Line, a monthly arts event which results in increased foot traffic in our downtown.
- We continue to enhance the Ardmore Initiative web site, [www.theardmoreinitiative.org](http://www.theardmoreinitiative.org) to be more representative of the character of our town and to 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.

##### **2009 Accomplishments:**

- We exhibited at the International Council of Shopping Center's Idea Exchange at the Phila. Convention Center and distributed over 100 info packets for brokers' use in leasing Ardmore commercial properties.
- We hosted a Brokers breakfast to discuss creative solutions to Ardmore's vacancies and began to explore short term leases with artists.
- 2009 saw 42 new business start ups/ relocations/ improvements within the business district and 5 businesses leave.
- Property and business owners invested over \$1,000,000 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.