

Ardmore Business District Authority The Ardmore Initiative Annual Report 2012



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Our **MISSION** is to create and maintain a thriving, economically viable downtown business district for the benefit of merchants, residents, and visitors alike and to serve as advocates for the district's commercial property and business owners.

The Ardmore Initiative en**VISIONs** Ardmore as a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly downtown center with a diverse mix of businesses and restaurants.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ARDMORE INITIATIVE

The Ardmore Initiative (AI) is a business district authority responsible for economic development, advocacy, business recruitment and retention, marketing and promotions, streetscape amenities and oversight of Façade Improvement programs within Ardmore's central business district. The Ardmore Initiative started as the Ardmore Main Street program in 1988, was designated a municipal business district authority by the Township of Lower Merion (LMT) in 1993, and was renewed in 1998, 2003 and 2008. We are a nationally accredited Main Street Program (National Trust for Historic Preservation), and designation as a Keystone Communities Main Street is pending (new designation required due to restructuring within the Pa. Department of Community and Economic Development). We have been a member of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's Classic Towns program since 2010. The organization's constituent base is made up of business and property owners within the district. AI's primary source of funding is a special assessment on commercial properties within the district boundaries, which generates approximately \$175,000 annually. Fundraising and grant activities generated an additional \$110,000 in 2012. These revenues are used to support our above-mentioned programs and activities.



BUSINESS RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

The Ardmore Initiative works to assist downtown businesses, to identify and attract a strategic mix of businesses to downtown Ardmore, and to promote commercial properties through a variety of programs and marketing activities. We provide marketing support to our businesses, assist them with Township permits and other issues, provide developers, brokers, and potential tenants with information regarding commercial properties, serve as advocates for new and existing businesses, and provide brokers with material to support leasing activities. **Most importantly, between 2011 and 2012 we secured \$100,000 in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant Funds via Lower Merion Township. These funds are being used to support a Business Assistance Grant program, whereby a new or expanding retail or restaurant business may receive up to \$25,000 in start-up funds.** Grants are tied to the creation of jobs for low-moderate income individuals. 2012 awardees are Tired Hands Brewing Company (\$25,000) and Viva Video (\$15,000).

BUSINESS & PROPERTY OWNER INVESTMENT

In 2012, business and property owners within the downtown business district representing 40 properties invested a minimum of \$923,888 in improvements to commercial properties. (data based on LMT permit activity).



ORGANIZATION

The organization is overseen by an 11-17 member Board of Directors. The Ardmore Initiative Board comprises local property and business owners, residents, professionals, and representatives from Lower Merion Township. Along with their time and expertise, our Board members also make annual financial contributions to the organization. In addition to the working Board, many in the community serve as volunteers on committees, special projects and special events. In 2012, there were a total of 1231 volunteer hours, valued at \$24,130, (based on Pa. value of \$19.60 per volunteer hour) donated to the organization. The Board is run by an Executive Committee consisting of Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, and the Initiative conducts its activities through Board-led committees and Task Groups.

The staff consists of a full-time Executive Director, 2 part-time administrative assistants, and a part-time person responsible for sidewalk cleaning. The Executive Director is responsible for overall operation of the organization including securing and managing grants, fundraising, marketing, special event execution, compliance with all reporting requirements, oversight of the volunteer Board of Directors and committee members, and for maintaining relationships with our stakeholders, Township government, and community partners. The part-time administrative assistants are responsible for book-keeping, office management and support to the Executive Director. AI also sub-contracts a Marketing Director on an as-needed basis.

The Ardmore Initiative is a member of the Ardmore Business Association, Main Line Chamber of Commerce, the Pa. Downtown Center, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Classic Towns Program, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Main Street Network and the Valley Forge Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

The Ardmore Initiative engaged in the following Marketing Activities in 2012:

In addition to our March supplement in Main Line Today magazine, we published an Ardmore supplement in November to promote Ardmore as a holiday shopping destination. These supplements reach 230,000 readers of Main Line Today Magazine and an additional 2,500 copies are distributed through local businesses and special events. We also published a 4-page holiday shopping insert in Main Line Media News outlets and, in conjunction with the Ardmore Business Association, advertised downtown Ardmore on billboards at 5 train stations along the Paoli-Thorndale line in November-December.

We ran 10 print and 26 online ads with Main Line Media News, along with 2 print and 4 online ads with Main Line Today Magazine. We also ran dedicated advertising for the Taste of Ardmore Food & Fashion event with the Bryn Mawr Film Institute, Main Line Chamber of Commerce and Main Line Neighbors and provided advertising support for local area non-profits.

We updated and re-printed our Ardmore Dining Guide and distributed it via local retailers and at Clover Market.

We increased our electronic communication with a mobile version of our website, www.ardmoreinitiative.org/mobile, continued bi-weekly E-blasts and expanded our Social Media presence with an increased presence on Facebook and Twitter.

GRANTS & FUNDRAISING

While our primary funding base is assessments on commercial properties, these revenues must be supplemented by grants and fundraising activities. Our signature fundraiser in 2012 was the popular Taste of Ardmore event. We also added a fee-for-service component that allowed us to provide services to and generate revenue from out-of-district businesses and from special events such as Clover Market, Ardmore Oktoberfest, and the Cricket Craft & BrewFest.

As required by law, an audit was performed on a \$100,000 New Communities grant we received from Pa. Department of Community & Economic Development in 2008 and the grant was closed out successfully. **The Initiative also applied for and received an \$80,000 New Communities Grant from Pa. Department of Community & Economic Development. These funds will be used as follows: \$50,000 to continue the Façade Improvement Grant program, \$22,764 for beautification and Streetscape amenities, including improved parking signage and directory kiosk(s), and \$7,236 for marketing activities to develop a Walk Ardmore! campaign.**

We also received \$500 from the Ardmore Rotary for downtown beautification, \$500 from the State Farm Foundation, and a contribution of \$10,000 from Lower Merion Township.

DESIGN/STREETSCAPE

In 2012, with funds from Pa. Department of Community & Economic Development New Communities and Keystone Communities grants, Façade Improvement Grants totaling \$9,716.94 were awarded as follows:

Jack McShea's, 34 E. Lancaster Ave.	\$5,000
Grape Leaves Grille, 40 Rittenhouse Place	\$573.20
Open Sky Energy, 41 Rittenhouse Place	\$433.64
Ardmore Paperback Bookshop Inc., 14 W. Lancaster Ave.	\$3,710.10

In 2012, we expanded hours for downtown cleaning. Hunter Hayes Landscape Design performed maintenance on the tree beds and planted fall mums and winter evergreens in approximately 50 downtown flower pots.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS



Jack McShea's before and after



14 W. Lancaster Avenue before and after



Grape Leaves Grille before and after

2012 ARDMORE ARRIVALS

Barbacoa

Cross Fit Training

Kunz & Germick Law Firm

Signs by Tomorrow

Tired Hands Brewing Co.

Viva Video

Wholesale Marble & Granite

WORTH NOTING

- The 4th Annual Taste of Ardmore event involved 15 restaurants, 24 retailers, 8 salons and 24 volunteer models in a showcase of Ardmore's food and fashion scene. With the support of 24 sponsors, and 10 in-kind sponsors, over \$21,000 was raised to support Ardmore Initiative programs.
- The Ardmore Initiative was mentioned in the media over 35 times in 2012.
- The Clover Market, organized by Ardmore resident Janet Long, continued to grow in 2012 and brought thousands of shoppers into the downtown.
- First Friday Main Line, Ardmore Oktoberfest, and Cricket Craft & BrewFest are business-owner-driven events that further contribute to the vitality of downtown Ardmore.
- Parking Revenues: Ardmore generated a total of \$798,923 in parking revenues (including meters, tickets and permits) for Lower Merion Township. This represents approximately 43% of total Township parking revenues.
- The commercial properties in the district are valued at \$100,391,960. According to tax millage rates, we estimate that these properties have contributed to the tax base as follows: \$420,642 to Lower Merion Township, \$2,357,614 to the School District and \$316,435 to Montgomery County.



2012 Taste of Ardmore Food & Fashion Event Photo by Ann Marie Casey Photography

2012 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Revenues

Assessment Revenue	176,938
Fee for Service	7,990
Fundraising Events, Sponsorships & Contributions	34,938
Interest Income	1,520
Miscellaneous Revenue	2,867
Reimbursed Program Expenses	41,810
Grants	19,834
Total Revenue	285,897

Expenses

Business Support & Advocacy	112,255
Economic Development & Marketing	35,162
Fundraising & Special Event Expenses	5,164
General & Operating Expenses	48,906
Streetscape	27,450
Training & Professional Development	941
Grants Awarded	49,717
Donations	192
Total Expenses	279,787
Net Income (Loss)	6,110

Financials are reported on an accrual basis.

Ardmore Initiative 2013 Board of Directors

Michael A. Coughlan, Chair, State Farm Insurance
Maryam Phillips, Vice-Chair, HSLC, Philadelphia, PA

Brett Swain, Treasurer

Nancy Scarlato, Secretary, Junior League of Philadelphia

Mike Silver, Esq., Chair Emeritus, Law Firm of Silver & Silver

Alex Archawski, AGA Consulting

Mark Curran, Suburban Square

Lisa Burns, Jack Burns Architecture

Anna Durbin, Law Offices of Anna Durbin

Mack Emanuel, Wells Fargo Insurance (ret)

Fenton J. Fitzpatrick, Beneficial Savings Bank (ret)

John Iannacone, Giannini Jewelers

Ex Officio

Commissioner Jane Dellheim, Lower Merion Township

Commissioner Cheryl Gelber, Lower Merion Township

Commissioner Steven Lindner, Lower Merion Township

Staff

Christine Vilardo, Executive Director

Linda Suter, Office Manager

Nicole Ratke, Marketing Director

Elleni Strantzalis, Office Staff

Harry Williams, Sidewalk Cleaning and Maintenance