

TOWN CENTER NEWS

Fall 2014

A quarterly newsletter on revitalization
and economic development in
Montgomery County's traditional towns



HATBORO WELCOMES NEW BUSINESS

There must be something in the water in Hatboro. Not only has the borough seen an increase in births, it's also seen a resurgence of business activity. Over 120 new businesses have opened in the borough over the past three years, and these businesses have generated more than 800 new jobs as well as tens of millions of dollars of investment. The York Road Town Center corridor, which had a 76% commercial occupancy rate in 2011, is now nearly fully occupied.

For most older towns looking to revitalize, having a vibrant and active business community and main street is a primary goal. A strong downtown is a sure sign that a community has revitalized.

Hatboro has a main street program and manager that are supported by both the borough government and the business community, creating a strong partnership for economic growth. Hatboro officials have consistently worked to keep their downtown and community vibrant.

Stephen Barth, the main street manager for Hatboro, shared some of his insights about being a main street manager:

- The guiding principle of a main street manager is stewardship of the community, trying to have the greatest good for the largest number of people for the longest time.
- The main street manager must also be seen as a neutral party working for the benefit of the whole community.
- It's important to make connections with every business in the community.
- Being a facilitator and connector of people is a main street manager's main job.
- Issues should be resolved creatively to produce a win-win for all parties. For example, perhaps a new residential development near a concrete plant can buy concrete from that plant for construction, giving the concrete company business and creating a communication link between both parties. Connecting these dots between very different businesses can help everyone.
- State representatives and senators and their office staffs are extremely helpful resources. Don't underestimate their ability to help or to make connections.
- It's important to troubleshoot regulatory issues that a new business might have with municipal staff early in the process. Municipal staff, as is done in Hatboro, must be willing to listen to business' concerns right away.



Hatboro has an active main street program, led by Stephen Barth.



Many of Hatboro's businesses are unique, drawing from a wide area, like this Little's John Deere dealership that went into an old Dodge dealer. Next door, an old carpet place has been remade as Aaron's Appliances.



The old Vick's manufacturing plant on the east end of town has been transformed into Station Park. Businesses in the 400,000 square foot facility include a solar energy researcher, a children's apparel distributor, a software company for athletic organizations, an ecommerce company, a bank call center, and a pharmaceutical marketing firm. Amenities include a lounge, Chris Dubil's café with delicious panini sandwiches, a day care center, and a fitness facility.



**For additional information, contact the Montgomery County Planning Commission at 610-278-3722
or visit www.montcopa.org/planning**

Our downtown, which straddles the most walkable section of York Road in Montgomery County, is just one block from the train station, is serviced by SEPTA's Route 22 buses, and is minutes from the PA Turnpike. These factors and the strong residential community make Hatboro an excellent community to invest in a new business and to raise a family. Property values are rising and new development and businesses are continuing to flock to Hatboro to be part of its revitalization.

John J. Zygmunt, President, Hatboro Borough Council

- The little things can make a big difference. Some businesses in the downtown were concerned about street trees blocking their signs. Instead of removing the trees, which is done too often and which damages a downtown's image, the borough trimmed the trees, giving clear sight lines to business signs.
- Businesses that are about to leave should be identified so that new tenants can be found right away. For legacy businesses with older owners, a succession plan is critical.
- Good things are contagious. Once a new business fixes up a building, the community can approach other businesses to fix their facades too. Not everyone will do it, but many will, helping to further improve a downtown area.



Nonno's bakery, owned by Salvatore Radazzo, is a newcomer to Hatboro. For those who prefer German baking over Italian, Lochel's bakery is right across the street.



Brewpubs are a great use for downtown areas. Hatboro's microbrewery, Crooked Eye Brewing, has expanded twice since opening in 2013.



Another unique business in Hatboro is Winship's clocks, owned by Keith Winship and his brother. They're currently working on repairing the large clock in the old Loller Academy building, now borough hall, which was built by the same man who installed Independence Hall's original clock.

 **check out what's happening!**

Collegeville recently unveiled a new mural, A Journey Through Time, by Michael Adams and Susannah Hart Thomer. Art can be an important tool to help traditional towns differentiate themselves from strip malls and shopping centers.



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