January 11 & 12, 2013

Creative Rahway: Call to Collaboration
Complete Notes

How Can Our Evolving Community Ignite Creativity and Innovation to Ensure a Thriving Rahway?

Creative New Jersey is dedicated to fostering creativity, innovation, and sustainability by empowering cross-sector partnerships in commerce, education, philanthropy, government, and culture in order to ensure dynamic communities and a thriving economy.

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## Contents

Preface: Creative Rahway Makes its Mark ................................................................. 4

Summary Report #1: How do we shake them up (without offending) to produce results ... 6

Session Report #2: How can we go GREEN in a way that enhances everything else that’s important in Rahway? ................................................................. 8

Session Report #3: How do we put on a Rahway Dancing with the Stars ............................ 10

Session Report #4: Enticing commuters to utilize Rahway ............................................ 13

Session Report #5: Branding Action Plan and Creation of Task Force ............................... 14

Session Report #6: Creating a marketing plan for Rahway ............................................. 16

Session Report #7: Athletes photo shoot .................................................................... 17

Session Report #8: To create & steer a Creative Rahway for Education ............................... 18

Session Report #9: Do you Like Your Shape/Creating a Healthy Rahway ............................... 19

Session Report #10: Creative Awareness for arts Rahway .................................................. 20

Session Report #11: Why make Rahway Pet Friendly? ...................................................... 21

Session Report #12: How can we bridge the gap between the Arts and Athletics to combine these two strengths in the community? ............................................... 22

Session Report #13: Identifying successful principles being practiced by world-class arts institutions and communities that present fine arts music programming................................................................. 24

Session Report #14: Building a Health Oriented Grocery Store in Rahway ............................ 26

Session Report #15: Coffee Shop in Rahway .................................................................... 27

Session Report #16: How do we involve the increasing Hispanic population in the Arts and our community? .............................................................................. 28

Session Report #17: Creating A Visual Arts Presence/Component in Rahway ......................... 29

Session Report #18: How do we provide experiences for our children to enrich their lives as future adults and their role in society? .............................................................................. 30

Session Report #19: How can we use first Thursdays to help us connect the separate communities of Rahway together ............................................................................. 32

Session Report #20: How do we encourage reinvestment in our downtown from within our community? How do we get residents to use their own money/IRA’s in projects that increase the resiliency of the community? ........................................ 33

Session Report #21: How do we fix a divided Rahway? Who are these people and why are you here? ..... 35

Session Report #22: How do we shake them up (without offending) to produce results. ............... 37

Session Report #23: How does the MAP/PROXIMITY TO NY present opportunities for the arts in Rahway? 39
Session Report #24: How to Bring the World to Rahway ................................................................. 41
Session Report #25: How to build a bridge between senior and youth ........................................ 42
Session Report #26: Keeping Gifted/Exception Children in the Rahway Schools ......................... 43
Session Report #27: Parade ........................................................................................................... 44
Session Report #28: Parking Issue ............................................................................................... 45
Session Report #29: Paying It Forward/Using creative recycling to beautify Rahway ............... 46
Session Report #30: How can we create practical & valuable business incentives & benefits that encourage and acknowledge shared exchange and shared prosperity? ................................................................. 48
Session Report #31: Creative Rahway for the Education Community: Student Mentoring .......... 50
Session Report #32: What can be done to both support local business and arts while simultaneously showcasing Rahway to our region the country and the world. What worked in the past? What will work in the future? ........................................................................................................................................ 51
Session Report #33: Can We Start a Community Theater? .......................................................... 53
Session Report #34: Sexy @ 60: Finding P.E.A.C.E. ....................................................................... 54
Session Report #35: What’s your idea of the perfect CHERRY? .................................................... 55
Session Report #36: What If .......................................................................................................... 56
Session Report #37: Fine Arts Charter School .............................................................................. 58
Session Report #38: Increasing the Amount of Activity and Vitality on the Streets of the Downtown and extending that throughout the City ......................................................................................... 60
Preface: Creative Rahway Makes its Mark

Seventy-five adults from all walks of life sat in a circle, looking at a stack of blank paper and markers in the center of the floor. Once the instructions were given, a flurry of action erupted as participants began approaching the center, writing their topics for discussion on pieces of paper and announcing them out loud, then posting them on the Market Place wall. That’s when the magic began. Energy filled the room as people engaged in this activity and it continued to grow throughout this unique Open Space convening.

Creative Rahway: A Call to Collaboration formed around the question “How can our evolving community ignite creativity and innovation to ensure a thriving Rahway?” Fostering Rahway’s arts community has been at the focus of the city’s redevelopment plan for years, and while the Arts were discussed in numerous conversations, the Open Space format allowed for many topics to be suggested in a democratic way. Sessions ranged from “How can we bridge the gap between the Arts and Athletics?” to “How can we encourage reinvestment in our downtown from within our community?”

As Day One came to a close, it was fascinating to watch and listen as people shared their experiences from the day’s discussions. There was genuine excitement and enthusiasm in the air.

Day Two began with an atmosphere of collaboration and focused energy. By reviewing the notes from previous dialogs, as well as through their own participation, individuals were aware of other participants’ interests. Spontaneous brainstorming sessions sprang up, relevant conversations took place, and groups formed around specific action items (including “branding” Rahway, and a new task force “Creative Rahway for Education”.)

As the convening came to an end, Creative Rahway participants felt – in their own words – “Optimistic”, “Hopeful”, and “Excited” about Rahway and their role in helping to shaping our town’s future.

Individuals came to the meeting, perhaps wondering “What will I get out of this? Why is it important for me to be here?” They left as a team: Informed about what is already happening in the town; Empowered to act on ideas that were discussed; Connected with other individuals who have similar interests; and United as a whole in the shared goal of ‘a thriving Rahway’.

Open space principles say “Whoever comes are the right people; Wherever it happens is the right place; Whenever it starts is the right time; Whatever happens is the only thing that could have; and When it is over, it is over.” But it feels more appropriate to say, “When it is over, it begins.” At least, that seems to be the case in Rahway, because now that the convening is over, Creative Rahway is just getting started.

Anyone interested in joining the Creative Rahway movement can send an email to creativerahway@gmail.com and connect to our Facebook page. You can also join us at our upcoming Creative Drinks meet-up at The Rail House’s new annex at 1443 Irving Street…Creative Drinks is an event created by our friends at the Arts
Council of the Morris Area and Creative Morristown……we loved the idea so we launching that in Rahway! We hope to see you there!

~Rachael Faillace  
Executive Director, Rahway Arts District and Creative Rahway Host Team Co-Leader  
*Originally posted on the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Blog (1.24.13)*

*Creative New Jersey is dedicated to fostering creativity, innovation, and sustainability by empowering cross-sector partnerships in commerce, education, philanthropy, government, and culture in order to ensure dynamic communities and a thriving economy.*
Summary Report #1: How do we shake them up (without offending) to produce results

Convener: Michael Smanko, Prism Props LLC

Participants: Cindy Soloman, Victoria Zelin, James Keane, Sondra Fishinger, Vanessa Rozzelle, Joanna Miles, Jeff Jotz, Jim Kennedy

1. Highlights and key points from your discussion:

   Intros of Participants and voice concerns:

   Parking concerns in downtown
   How can the Parking Authority assist arts center attendees with parking….. set fee for quick exit?

   Can we meet with the Parking Authority board to voice concerns?

   Rahway redevelopment app: Rahway Redevelopment Agency.com

   Find ways for the public to be advised of places to stop in town for food & drink…… especially for non residents.   Advise attendees of many parking options.

   Street scape: Discussion of how we can encourage building owners to fill empty store fronts with temporary display, artwork or “pop-up” gallery.

   Continued discussion of ways to improve window signage on storefronts to make businesses more welcoming.

   Problem: recalcitrant or uncooperative landlords.

   Encourage startups:
   Investment in new business startups
   Encourage meeting places…. Coffee shops etc.

   Encourage startups (cont.)
   Stay open later daily

   Engage more residents to participate or attend functions.
   Outreach to various communities (Spanish speakers & various interest communities)

   Large community events
   In addition to Hot rods/ 5k race / bike race encourage other large events to be held in Rahway.
   Visibility is strength……. even if a small percentage of the attendees return it is a plus.
Suggestions:
Rubber duck race on river
More concerts open air
Battle of the food trucks
Celebrate 85th anniversary of Rahway Theater at UCAC.
Organ concerts

Recap:
Good & Bad: Negative reaction to Artists housing through Actor’s Fund due to conflicts with church parking

Commando Gardeners: Finding ways to improve pocket parks and town planters with volunteer community action. Example: Arts Park

2. What is your calling for action?

Wind Up and Take Away:
SPEAK UP…… A LOT!
ENCOURAGE THE SILENT
Session Report #2: How can we go GREEN in a way that enhances everything else that’s important in Rahway?

Convener: Victoria Zelin

Participants: Susana Reisinger, Jennifer Schiffl, Stephanie Volina, Patricia R Valeno, Robert Dianno

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

If we got the county to dredge the waterways to make more room for water, and kept the water moving, by
- putting in a fountain (like they did in Cranford)
- or putting in small-hydro turbines under the water to keep the water flowing
these might be done in a way that generated electricity, which might pay for the initiative, or, there may be money to pay for it in the Parks budget.

This would help deal with the following issues:
- Mosquitos, which are a terrible problem in summer. Right now, there is so much standing water that mosquitos breed.
- Algae on the lake (sometimes it looks like a golf course rather than a lake)
- Flooding

Recycling is an opportunity. Other towns bring their recycling to our recycling center.
- Baltimore uses side by side compacting bins, one for trash, other for recycling – it is neat, and requires less labor to empty containers, saving money over the long term
- Woodbridge gives residents two huge bins: one for garbage and one for all their recycled materials (in one bin, together). They pick up garbage once a week, and recycling once a week (versus our two garbage pickups a week – which people in other towns LOVE, even though they complained at the beginning). There is a uniformity of containers, which looks better, plenty of room in the bins, and may save labor costs by reducing pickup frequency.

Solar and renewable energy:
- Our municipal buildings and schools already use solar and even generate more than they use, so we should publicize it.
- We could create a citizen team that identifies all the residential and commercial roofs in town for which solar would be economically beneficial (work with a solar company that uses googlemaps to determine which roofs make sense), and then the team visits those homes/businesses and provides the business case for why they should all allow the solar company to put solar on their roof (it doesn’t cost anything, and provides a lower cost for electricity – it’s a total win/win – a no-brainer decision for a homeowner – it’s called a PPA or Power Purchase Agreement, and becoming more popular). The solar company provides a referral bonus for every solar system they end up putting up. We could create a pool of...
funds for great projects that promote sustainability and make the town more resilient.

We need to Plant trees where so many fell down near the waterways, after Sandy, to stop erosion, flooding, and to look better

Sustainable Jersey

- We have a Sustainable Jersey team, and most people don’t know it! We even won a NJ Green competition two years ago. Let’s get behind them and make it more publicized

Bringing people together through GREEN, SUSTAINABILITY, RESILIENCE, whatever we call it – crosses all divisions: young, old, race, creed – everyone cares about the future and the environment (and the Hispanic community is particularly plugged into sustainability).

Artistic communities also tend to be more GREEN, so it’s a natural. Respect for the earth.

Play on Rahway’s long heritage, and wanting to be resilient into the future, helping people reduce their energy costs, and being a community that is planning for the future, climate change, needing to consume less, etc.
Session Report #3: How do we put on a Rahway Dancing with the Stars

Convener: Joanna Miles

Participants: Asha Bryant, Terry Benjamin, Daniel Garay, Joanna Miles, Marisa Olguin, Vanessa Rozelle, Mack Williams

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:
   - Identify stars in Rahway (athletes, politicians, community and civic leaders et al)
   - Identify professional dancer/dancers to work with the stars
   - Identify who money raised from tickets goes to
   - Ticket price and location
   - Prizes
   - Format of the Program

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)
   - Convening meeting
   - Projected Date
   - Publicity
   - Contributions
   - Coordinating Event Team

Breakdown of Discussion and Start of Event Planning

WHAT? Rahway's Rising Stars! (Rahway's version of Dancing with the Stars)

WHY? Bring Rahway Community Together
     Community Fund-raiser

WHEN? Yearly Event – June before school ends?

WHERE? Hamilton Stage/ UCPAC Main Stage dependent on projected audience numbers

WHO?
   Dancers: Dance Theater Group (Rahway- Irving-Lewis)
   Dance School (Rahway- Irving St.)
   Amy Garcia Philips (Rahway- Dance Teacher)
   Daphne Lee (Dancers for Ike)

Stars: 6 Faces in Rahway and one professional
Suggested names include:

Professional Athletes
- Antonio Garay
- Darian Caldwell
- Ike Ighmanosa
- Michelle De-Frei
- Andre Neblett
- Earl Clark
- Lewis Campbell
- Jamie Godfrey

Rahway Faces
- Jim Kennedy
- Russ Taylor

School Admin/ Principals
- School Athletic Coaches

Public Services- Police, Fire
- Captain of girls Basketball team
- Council Person
- Member of city (Jeff Jotts/ Ken Caselly
- High School Track Coach
- Dion - Parking

Judges:
- Rahway Dance Theater
- School of Dance and Drama
- Rahway Resident
- Ballet with a Twist
- American Theater Group

SHOW FORMAT

6 stars paired with 6 dancers (3 women, 3 men)
Each dance about 1 min 30 seconds

Part One
Opening Dance Act/ musical act from high school
Round One Dances 1-3
Judging
Performance (by auditioned Rahway group)
Round One Dances 4-6
Judging
Round Two Dances 1-3
Judging
Round Two Dances 4-6
Judging

Interval

Professional Performance
Awards

TICKETS

$5 children and seniors
$10 adults

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Cost
- MC (Chesney Snow)
- Rehearsal Space- Dance Studio Hamilton/ Library space
- Rehearsal Time
  - 3 hours on morning or show AM
  - Or 3-5 sessions week of show
- Publicity
  - Phone/ e-mail vote from public on night
  - Prizes – Certificates from restaurants
  - 50/50
  - Senior Citizen Line Dancing
  - TIME FRAME

ACTION

- Check city/ schools’ calendar for show date
- Team meeting
- Reach out to dancers
- Select participating stars and reach out to them

*Names of people in this document are suggested and spelling of names are not necessary correct.*
Session Report #4: Enticing commuters to utilize Rahway

Convener: Jennifer & Susana

Participants: Anthony "Speezi" Spaziani, Jennifer Schiffl, Susana Reisinger, Joanna

1. Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Create a Welcome Rahway message board, multi-dimensional
  - One side would include a map
  - One side would include an electronic message board
    - Featuring message of the day, things to do around town that day/week; good restaurants/restaurant deals/discounts
  - One side would include a non-tech message board to connect people with products and/or services
  - Anthony from Speezi Comics created a visual of what it could look like
  - Board could be easily decorated for all national holidays
- Footprints (permanent) leading from board to key locations around town
- Billboards on train stations (owned by NJ Transit; Rahway has been trying to get rid of due to unsavory advertisements
- Offer free Wi-Fi to residents
- Sidewalk dining is allowed downtown, but not done...why?
- Safety...what can be done about panhandlers?

2. What is your calling for action? (optional)

- Contact Rachel from Rahway Arts District about funds for message board, contacts for town, footprints, map, etc.
- Contact NJ Transit about using space for board...Amy Garcia Phillips from Content Dance has contact for NJ Transit
- Figure out any constraints or boundaries to work within for Welcome Rahway message board
- Contact Anthony Spaziani from Speezi Comics for proposal on message board
- Contact town for electric to run board and person to keep electronic messages updated
Session Report #5: Branding Action Plan and Creation of Task Force

Convener: Jim and Genevieve Luce

Participants: James Keane, Len Vanderwende, Russ Taylor, Bill Rack, Kevin O’Brien, Anthony Spaziani, Rebecca Sauer, Debbie Partesi, Barbara Bilger, Sondra Bailey, Derron Palmer, Lawrence Cappiello, Joel Schwartz, Genevieve Luce

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Brand.

TAG LINE
Today’s Rahway. Accessible, Affordable, Awesome.
Today's Rahway. Accessible, Affordable, Wonderful
Today’s Rahway. Quality So Close To Home.
Get Hooked on Rahway.
Rahway. Experience the Passion.
Rahway. Something for Everyone.

Ad campaign
Dynamic photo. Rotating profiles of who we are and what we bring to Rahway that the outside world would be attracted by.
Consistent message is a promise. Our job to deliver on that promise as a community. We all have to own it or it doesn’t work.

Buying
People buy the why, not the what or the who.

What. Is the brand and is reflected in the logo.
Why. A reason that I identify and is part of the marketing message.
Who. Comes last.

Simon Sineck Ted.com “about success”

Differentiating ourselves. What makes us, us???

3 year branding and marketing campaign for the cause of the image of the new Rahway.
What is message? Use just the message… over and over…. Like we associate the golden arches with eating fast food….

**What is your calling for action? (optional)**

Everyone email lucegroup@mac.com by Friday Jan 18 with reflections and comments on the above for dissemination back to the group, and to the Rahway Arts District.
Session Report #6: Creating a marketing plan for Rahway

Convener: Celeste Santana
Participants: Shelly Deluca, Coliu Gittens

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Overcoming the negative perception of Rahway
- Emphasize the history of Rahway-personalities, historical figures
- Community theater-involve local people, then people from beyond
- Who will be responsible of financing the cost of marketing?

What is your calling for action? (optional)

Create a group/committee responsible of drafting the marketing plan (A representative of the different organization in town should take an interest in joining this committee and giving their input on how to market Rahway

Identifying target audience
- Surrounding towns within Union County
- Commuters

Collect information from Rahway visitors to obtain a demographics and target these individuals

Implementation of different channels to convey a positive message about Rahway
- Use local media-an ongoing effort to put forth a positive message
- Distributing informational packages to Real State agents with information about: schools, attractions, tax rates, about Rahway in general

Utilize social networks
- Facebook-Create a group about Rahway

Working with what makes us different:
- Marketing the arts
- Marketing as the transportation center of NJ: “You can get there from here”
Session Report #7: Athletes photo shoot

Convener: Rachael Faillace

Participants: Daniel J. Garay, Patricia Volino-Reinoso, Rachael Faillace, Amy Garcia Philips

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Photo shoot of pro athletes from Rahway – two-sided to show artistic side and pro sports side
- Rat Pack (Phat Pack)
- Painting
- Signing, etc.

Using the photos for Rahway’s marketing campaign – print and web ads, calendar, gallery show

Inspiration – California TV ad campaign – It’s more than sun and surfing

Rahway pro athletes gallery show
Photos, personal things (handwritten notes, twitter quotes, drawings, etc.)

Antonio Garay smart car shoot - sponsor

Dance lessons and Rahway athletics partnership to enrich, improve agility and dexterity.

What is your calling for action? (optional)

Daniel will speak with all five pro athletes to see if they will agree to be in the photo shoot. Rachael, Tricia and Daniel will follow up. Potential photo shoot in June.
Session Report #8: To create & steer a Creative Rahway for Education

**Convener:** Patricia Volino-Reinoso

**Participants:** Margaret Cilia, Amy Thebodeau, Kristine DeJesus- Farrar, Amy Garcia Phillips, Stephanie Volino, Robert DiAnno, Shelly Deluce- Caravella, Andrea Zapac, Derron Palmer, Alex Shipley, Jim Kennedy, Michelle McTamney

**What is your calling for action? (optional)**

Meet with Mr. Edward Yergalonis to report outcomes of the convening. Discuss plan of action, concerns of parent groups, magnet schools, etc.

Creating and steering a Creative Rahway for Education committee to develop a better relationship with the community, ie local business owners, professionals, resources, other groups with similar interests, such as, RAD via Ron Dolce. Committee should bring together stakeholders from different sectors of the arts, the community, and educators.

Our committee would start a mentorship program with the schools starting with the after-care program students receiving a Creative Rahway Passport “stamp” from local business owners/programs that visit our students. This may include a discount for a restaurants, theater tickets, library rewards, dance/ acting lessons, etc.

Connect local photographer with successful athletes/artists/professionals from our district. Display portraits around Rahway esp. the schools. (Marketing Rahway)

Create an environment when both educators and community members look to each other for resources prior to looking outside of the city. Create a system of referrals of business, motivators, and consultants to school groups. For example, Team building workshop and field trip.

Emphasis on utilizing downtown resources for field trips, meeting spaces, tutoring, etc. Allowing businesses and experts to support the students of Rahway in their endeavors.

Forming a committee for all stakeholders to be a part of the decision-making process.
Session Report #9: Do you Like Your Shape/Creating a Healthy Rahway

Convener: Marisa Olguin

Participants: Kristine De Jesus-Farrar

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

How do we create an environment of healthful eating and exercise in Rahway?

- Access to healthy whole foods
- Access to fitness classes and equipment
- Offer marathons and duathlon (cycling and running)
- Target wellness education to mothers and teenagers
- Help women become more active
- Healthy cooking classes
- Help people connect to increase chance of creating sustainable health changes and promote mental health
- Increase likelihood of increasing healthy by providing support at a community level

Why You?
Why Now?
Why Not?

What is your calling for action? (optional)

People to get together to start the process

Market local resources

(How do we get more people to get invested in making Rahway a healthy and active community?)
Session Report #10: Creative Awareness for arts Rahway

Convener: Jim Vagias

Participants: Sondra Bailey, Stephanie Volino, Russ Taylor, Margaret Cilia, Vanessa Rozzelle, Barbara Bilger, Len Vanderwende, Kevin O’Brien, Debra Partesi, Roberta Frimpter, Sondra Fishinger, Elizabeth Murphy

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

The need for cross-pollination of various “organizations/groups” resulting in a monthly electronic calendar of events and feature articles focusing on each of the following:

- Commerce
- Culture
- Education

Each organization will share their mailing list with the “umbrella” website (for exclusive use of this purpose).

The calendar/newsletter will include each participating group’s logo and hyperlink to their website.

This could include lists of restaurants by type, including hours, etc. with links to those restaurants.

Who runs it?
Who funds?
Session Report #11: Why make Rahway Pet Friendly?

Convener: Amy Thebodeau

Participants: Michael S., Collin, Jim

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Rahway needs a Dog Park either downtown or at the county par. Located downtown it can draw in outsiders who may buy products from business owners. Someone can open a pet shop. Rahway can have an adoption event, a spay/neuter & microchip fair, encourage reuse of plastic shopping bags for pet waste. Rahway will be having a pet rescue ran by me. I already foster and rescue pets in my home. I recently took in 2 blind senior shih tzus in addition to my deceased fathers partially blind cat and am fostering a male kitten.

What is your calling for action? (optional)
Speak to higher authority on where and how to get a dog park opened in town that can mirror the community garden.
Session Report #12: How can we bridge the gap between the Arts and Athletics to combine these two strengths in the community?

Convener: Patricia Volino-Reinoso

Participants: Danny Garay, Jim Kennedy, Andrea Zapac, Amy Garcia Phillips, Rev. Dr. Erika Phillips, Vanessa Rozzelle

Highlights & key points from your discussion: Outside the Rahway Community we are famous for our Arts Program and our Athletic program. How do highlight and or merge these strengths for the greater good.

We have highly successful residents and graduates in both field, how can we market this?

Dancing with the Stars ideas: pair our professional athletes/college athletes with the Arts community dancers to have a Dancing with the Stars event.

Are we discouraging children from being successful in both arenas?

Are the schools set up for students to be able to participate in both?

Is the Rec center being utilized fully and successfully? Are we marketing programs?
- Is it all basketball, all the time?
- price point
- funding
- programs
- targeted ages

Creating a system of credit for community involvement – valuing community involvement in groups such religious groups, choirs, community events, etc.

Allowing for rigor in areas of the arts and athletics
- school credit for athletics to allow students more time for studies and arts electives
- Dance program for strength conditioning and flexibility

Are community adults focused on what is good for the child, or promoting their own agendas?
- looking for well rounded individuals
- do athletes lose out on the social skills gained from being involved in the arts?

We need a new model of teaching the Arts – poetry, song etc.
Marketing our strengths better!!!!

Cultural diversity major, get credit for attending classes downtown

Are our girls left behind?
   - Are there enough athletic and arts programs for the girls in the community

Arts for the Youth
   - connections with the daycare centers

Questions posed:
How can we remove the jock stigma?

How can we market our pro-athletes within the arts district?

How do we play both of those strengths?

How can we ensure that our young students and community members are exposed to successful community leaders, athletes, artists, and alums? Promote the TRADITION OF RAHWAY!

Is there a bullying factor against artists?
Does this hold talented students back?
Session Report #13: Identifying successful principles being practiced by world-class arts institutions and communities that present fine arts music programming.

How do they integrate fundraising and co-branding with businesses to marry their interests into our core requirements for brand imaging, promotion and audience building? What can we learn from them? How can we apply them to create a mature, successful brand of world class fine arts?

Convener: Jim Luce

Participants: James Kennedy, Ennis Carter, Russ Taylor, Jim Luce, Genevieve Luce, Shirley J Palmer, Sondra Bailey

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

We asked the following questions:

What are the enduring practices of successful arts organizations, arts communities, business and promotional partnerships that we can learn from and apply here?

What specific approach would be most powerful?

What are we known for and how do we get a unified, compelling and consistent message out globally, regionally, and locally?

What can we take from the examples of institutions such as Carnegie Hall, the MET, BAM?

What can we do that is completely unique to us – that nobody else can do?

What strategic partnerships can we develop with more mature brands that are already completely successful but that may need exposure in the New Jersey market?

What is our real target market and how do we arrive at this conclusion (what is the marketing Strategy and who is the mastermind – the strategist)

What is the time frame? We start now, but need to BUILD upon what we have already working for us here.

Who are the top 5 corporations likely to find funding fine arts

RSI BANK (currently active)
How does fine arts musical programming fit into an integrated effort to strengthen the “RAHWAY” brand?
UCPAC. World class pop. HAMILTON stage. World class classical and jazz.

How do we go about integrating community-wide involvement in cross-promotion of restaurant and parking discounts, and other initiatives that expand business.

Where does the public get the information that influences them into action in attending and supporting classical and jazz music?

The fine arts aspect of music presentation in Rahway has a brand…
the brand is CONVENIENT, AFFORDABLE QUALITY.

People will pay to come. Money is not the most important issue. Talent and available information are the drivers to audience building.

Rahway residents leave Rahway to go to hear music, attend movies and eat out… we need to connect with them. $5/ticket events once a month?

Pop Up events with other institutions/governments fine arts initiatives…. (i.e. van Gogh museum, Newark museum, Caramoor…. Pop up bookstores, events and coffee bar… )
Session Report #14: Building a Health Oriented Grocery Store in Rahway

Convener: Kristine De Jesus-Farrar

Participants: Amy Garcia Phillips, Angela Pryor

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
An opportunity to support local business
Keep money in Rahway
Makes Rahway a destination that encourages patronage of other local businesses
Bring a different consumer to Rahway
Improve the health of the community
Must be a name brand market (whole foods, fairway, or Trader Joes)

What is your calling for action? (optional)
Locate a space to accommodate market and parking
Find someone who knows how to woo these stores to Rahway
Create some incentive to bring a large market to Rahway
Session Report #15: Coffee Shop in Rahway

Convener: Amy Garcia Phillips

Participants: Jim Kennedy, Jeff Jotz, Barbara Bilger, Nikki Almertri, Celest Santana

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

The UCPAC is opening a café (with street access). The business model is to offer wine, beer and spirits or coffee, tea and pastries based on the performance of the evening. In addition, offering some morning hours with either a paid or volunteer staff.

There is also a deal being worked out with Starbucks for a store closer to the train station.

What is your calling for action? (optional)

It’s already in the works! 😊
Session Report #16: How do we involve the increasing Hispanic population in the Arts and our community?

Convener:

Participants: Joanna Miles, Cindy Solomon, Marisa Olguin, Al Shipley, James Keane

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Language barrier
Undocumented status
Hispanic liaison
UCPAC Hamilton Stage programming
Identify the different nationalities
Target “Moms” through the public schools/involve in PTAs
Library Programs geared towards Hispanic population

What is your calling for action? (optional)

Translation of cable network into Spanish
International Food Festival
Successful Hispanic business owners to mentor “Mom and Pop” shops
Get parents involved
Advertise Literacy Volunteer
Investigate if there is a Spanish Chamber of Commerce in the area/county
Session Report #17: Creating A Visual Arts Presence/Component in Rahway

Convener: Jim Kennedy

Participants: Marisa Olguin, Joseph Macula, Terry Benjamin, Marc Miller, Genevieve Luce, Jim Luce, Shelly Deluca, Lawrence Cappiello, Jim Kennedy, Rebecca Sauer, Joel Schwartz et.al...

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Public Sculpture/ Competition/Event, Flexible Exhibit space(s)
Pop-Up Gallery/event activity,
Finding Artists to involve: Internet, Other venues,
BLOCKBUSTER exhibit---famous artist involved in Rahway Event,
CONSISTENT/CONVENIENT/AFFORDABLE----Brand description for Rahway arts
Branding Visual Arts, Murals, Animation artists, Independent filmmakers,
FILM FESTIVAL, Residents---artists living or working in town, Co-op Art Gallery, Tours of artists work spaces,
Solar System Sculptures throughout downtown,

Pot-Luck Events to raise money for Artists Projects
Using Buildings before properties are developed/re-rented
Session Report #18: How do we provide experiences for our children to enrich their lives as future adults and their role in society?

Convener:

Participants: Colin Gittens, Gail Miller, Margaret Cilia, Stephanie Volino, Vanessa Rozelle, Eric Miles, Joanna Miles, Robert DiAnno, Amy Thibodeau, Amy Garcia Phillips

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
Group identified 2 main ways to do this—mentoring and general enrichment.

- Make connection between school and theater, holding workshops for children.
- Previously, there had been a “Rahway Reads One Book” that was run by the library. This program had faded away, perhaps it could be revived. Link this to the theater?
- Have in-town internships where students partner with an existing business person.
- Speak to children early on about careers and dreams—what do you want to be/do?—and do this at age 5, age 12, and in high school. At the older ages, comment on “this is what you wanted to do previously, has that changed/why? More than just a cursory discussion. Mentoring will help foster future decisions.
- Have local dance schools get connection to the burgeoning arts groups. Have a dance school performance before a “main event” at one of the main stages?
- Bring role models back to the schools—recent graduates talk to the kids. Students need to see the success stories. Mentoring for those from families who are the first to go to college. Example—a participant went to see the Christmas Show at Rockefeller center that included a discussion session with a Rockette. Very positive experience! Can we do that here—meet performers after a play, dance, etc?
- In Elizabeth, students are required to do community service as a part of their education. Can we do that here?
- Every kid should have a plan.
- Need a unified group for families, community, and children—revive the welcome wagon. How do we keep families settled, happy, and thriving.
- Vital to tell children to aim high, and that a particular course is OK.
- Have mentors relate their experiences and chart the path of how they got from here to there. How do we find these mentors? Volunteers are needed; how do we convince them of the importance of this work? Also some mentor situations are impractical (ie, taking kids on actual fire calls)
- Help children to discover their passion—there is an intersection of creativity and imagination, knowledge and wisdom (taking the knowledge you have so that you know what to do—what path to take)
- Mentoring might present opportunity to work with the Chamber of Commerce in providing mentors. It would be ideal to work with the leaders of existing organizations such as the chamber.
- A link between seniors and students may also be beneficial. Retirees from various walks of life could provide useful examples to the young. Seniors in general are very willing. Might also provide a surrogate grandparent role. Have these interactions based around events (ie, holidays, use
storytelling, foster respect, and boost quality of life for both groups). Survey seniors as to their interest, background, profession to create a database of resources.

- In student/senior interactions, sometimes useful to have children lead the learning (ie, show seniors how to use the internet, find videos, etc. Foster connections between kids and grown ups.
- At-risk kids might be a good group to target first for these interventions. Hopefully catch the kids young, before they become at risk (by the 5th grade)
- Cannot be done solely at/by schools, but would also involve after school and Saturday programs.
- Make outreach to guidance counselors at middle and high school, school principals, and ACE programs (Alternate Career Education)
- Existing school aftercare programs might be enriched by having seniors go their—create one on one interactions, beneficial to have smaller groups so that “groupthink” does not take over.
- The Arts Guild runs a number of classes that have a mentoring approach. Art resulting from classes is displayed at downtown locations.
- They were also involved with an art/performance program in which a play (The Last Butterfly) on the holocaust was presented at the school each year, which had a discussion component.
- How do you change the perception of Rahway—there are good things going on in terms of education, how do you get the word out? Rahway offers diversity, community, and we have to tout this. How do we tell this story? Create organized PR effort, via the Patch, the Suburban News, or other media. Write the stories, and try to get them into the local media. Change perception one story at a time.
- Rahway schools have improved, but still not in the top 10 of this socioeconomic group. How do we get to be the best? And how do we promote the schools?
- There has been positive parental involvement in the schools and fundraising (ie, tricky trays) that have resulted in more trips for the students.
- Merge art and athletics to create a powerful force.
- Schools need to have success stories of graduates “on the wall” at the school to serve as an example. Some of the examples used (ie, Abbott and Costello) are unknown to the kids. Use more current examples.
- Mention of realtors who had steered potential residents into nearby towns because of preconceptions about Rahway or their clients. Perhaps we can create an informational packet that would go to realtors to tell the real story of Rahway—contain information on schools, local features, conveniences, etc. Involve the Chamber of Commerce with this? Currently, there do not seem to be programs/information for new home owners. How can Rahway help people who stay in Rahway?
Session Report #19: How can we use first Thursdays to help us connect the separate communities of Rahway together

Convener: Amy Garcia Phillips

Participants: Amy Garcia Phillips, Larry (Arts Guild), Al Shipley

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

1. We need to talk to Tony Diege who runs the FT events.
2. Limit it to April-Oct (culmination is Culture Crawl)
3. How do we connect businesses/events so people are drawn to walk through the downtown?
4. How do we get people to come downtown?
   + Have a themed night. Ex. Latin Night, HS night, Afro American, night,…

We need to have a Central Planning Group to coordinate all the efforts of different groups.
   RAD
   Chamber of Commerce
   Arts Center
   Rec Center
   Education
   Business District
   Etc.
Session Report #20: How do we encourage reinvestment in our downtown from within our community? How do we get residents to use their own money/IRA’s in projects that increase the resiliency of the community?

Convener: Rachael Faillace

Participants: Jonathan Cloud, Victoria Zelin, Tony M. Walker, Daniel J. Garay, Patricia Volino-Reinoso, Celeste Santan, Gail Miller, Eric W Miles, Marisa Olguin, Rodney Ferrar
Joel Schwartz, Shelley Deluca-Caravella, Marc Miller, Anthony “Speezi” Spaziani, Rebecca Sauer, Michelle McTamney, Terry Benjamin

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Investments can be monetary or non-monetary
Buy Local movement
Invest money into businesses
Rahway residents should bring people from out of town to enjoy the social scene
The biggest jump is getting people to come for the 1st time
People always ask “What’s in it for me? What do I get out of my investment?”
There needs to be a clear vision and message to take action
What about people who don’t care for art? How do you put multiple visions forward?
Art can intersect with anything.
Residents and businesses can sponsor things that push the community forward. Ex. Beautification projects, ‘Sponsor a…. (fill in the blank)’
Sponsor doesn’t have to just pay for new projects, can help maintain existing projects.
Utilize crowd-sourcing
Residents and businesses can support an organization that does a lot of work within the community already.
Communication – there should be more collaboration between businesses
Work together to promote as a destination
Crowd-sourcing competition between restaurants to raise money for destination marketing
Utilize multi-pronged marketing campaigns with target markets

Rahway has 5 pro athletes – Ask them to sponsor events, concerts, etc. to attend and meet people
Their presence would encourage people to come out and pros want to be welcomed back.
“Six degrees of separation of Rahway” campaign
  - How are you connected to Rahway?
  - Rahway as the center of the world.
  - “It all comes back to Rahway.”
Restaurants and businesses can do a joint marketing campaign – press releases announcing the famous people who are coming to venues soon. 
We need to overcome negatives: 
- parking limitations 
- safety 
- walkability 
Resident parking sticker and business owners – needs to be some amenities so they do not get tickets. 
Raise awareness of the parking deck – signage? 
Investigate 365 Things to Do - Website 
Leveraging resources between businesses, organizations, and schools 
Tap into Rahway’s advantages and populations: 
Athletes 
Populations – including Latino 
TV shoots/movies 
Consistent message needs to be communicated throughout businesses 
Reference guide; more information on the city available at Hotel Indigo 
Can lighting be used to create a cohesive geographic area? Ex. ‘Old Town Rahway’ is lit differently than the rest of town 
Infomercial for TV landing channel for hotels – possibly a collaboration between City government, Chamber of Commerce and Rahway Arts District? 
We need a plan for retention once people come to Rahway. How do we get them information in the future? 
Data collection needs to be an incentive-based, seamless process. 
Ideas: utilize public service announcements, create an App for Rahway, use Scavenger website, partner with like-minded organizations, capitalize on Live Nation via website links, Raffle.
Session Report #21: How do we fix a divided Rahway? Who are these people and why are you here?

Convener: Bill Rack and Cindy Solomon

Participants: Vanessa Rozzelle, Joanna Miles, Roberta Frimpter, Rus, Sondra Bailey, Et al

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Town divided by geographic location
People not knowing where downtown is
There is a physical division
County divide who don't come to certain sections
Image perception haunts the town
What do we do to overcome it?
Change our perceptions
We become advocates for the town
The Harley Davidson day where people come from out of town to help change the perception
These events bring money to the restaurants
How can we nightlight the town
New people have moved in and it's looking different.
How do you bring different groups together, racial and social divide.
Things have changed a bit, there was a time where there was little diversity.
We have a large diversity community in the high schools
Why would someone want to come to Rahway?
Tolerance brings people to town. Programs in school for each tolerance.
Kids were involved in activities
Things that divide are geographies
There is something of quality in Rahway and events have sold out
You missed something wonderful in Rahway and you have to be persistent
People have a reputation in their mind; they have shown up and plan to come back.
Word of mouth is very important
Increase of people with merchants and drover
We have to be patient with the gestation period
People are paying high rents to live in Rahway
Things are growing in Rahway with new projects
Project in Detroit, Friday night every month 15 mile bike ride through the city.
Doing activities show you know Rahway is a wonderful place.
Housing in Rahway look good
Rahway is a clean city
More activities as groups
Few things are open in the evening in Rahway. Thursday nights, business could stay open Groups who stopped going downtown and they don't know how things have changed

What is your calling for action? (optional)

Help to change the perception
Bring quality into town
Group and family events, zoom bike crawl, scavenger hunt, city bike ride, progressive dinner
Rely on volunteers who can promote the town
Better lighting in town, identify the areas that need better lighting than it looks more alive and gives the impression that it is safe. This can be dealt with easily.
Continue with the shows to bring people out
Better signage for the attractions and programs
Get people to know what arts are available.
Promotion of art events at the train station and commuters would know what is going on.
Session Report #22: How do we shake them up (without offending) to produce results.

Convener: Michael Smanko, Prism Props LLC

Participants: Cindy Soloman, Victoria Zelin, James Keane, Sondra Fishinger, Vanessa Rozzelle, Joanna Miles, Jeff Jotz, Jim Kennedy

Highlights and key points from your discussion:

Intros of Participants and voice concerns:

Parking concerns in downtown
   How can the Parking Authority assist arts center attendees with parking..... set fee for quick exit?

Can we meet with the Parking Authority board to voice concerns?

Rahway redevelopment app: Rahway Redevelopment Agency.com

Find ways for the public to be advised of places to stop in town for food & drink...... especially for non residents. Advise attendees of many parking options.

Street scape: Discussion of how we can encourage building owners to fill empty store fronts with temporary display, artwork or “pop-up” gallery.

Continued discussion of ways to improve window signage on storefronts to make businesses more welcoming.

Problem: recalcitrant or uncooperative landlords.

Encourage startups:
   Investment in new business startups
   Encourage meeting places.... Coffee shops etc.

Encourage startups (cont.)
   Stay open later daily

Engage more residents to participate or attend functions.
   Outreach to various communities (Spanish speakers & various interest communities)

Large community events
In addition to Hot rods/ 5k race / bike race encourage other large events to be held in Rahway.
Visibility is strength....... even if a small percentage of the attendees return it is a plus.
Suggestions:
- Rubber duck race on river
- More concerts open air
- Battle of the food trucks
- Celebrate 85th anniversary of Rahway Theater at UCAC.
- Organ concerts

Recap:
- Good & Bad: Negative reaction to Artists housing through Actor’s Fund due to conflicts with church parking
- Commando Gardeners: Finding ways to improve pocket parks and town planters with volunteer community action. Example: Arts Park

**What is your calling for action?**

Wind Up and Take Away:
- SPEAK UP……. A LOT!
- ENCOURAGE THE SILENT
Session Report #23:  How does the MAP/PROXIMITY TO NY present opportunities for the arts in Rahway

Convener:  Marc Miller

Participants: Joseph Macur, Joel Schwartz, Gerry Gessie, Debra Partesi, Kevin O'Brien, Len Vanderwende, Jeff Jotz, Rebecca Sauer, Lawrence Capprello, Shelly DeLuca-Caravalle, Joseph Kennedy

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
Three major drivers:
- visitors to Rahway
- artists and others who work in Rahway
- Residents of Rahway
How to increase the vibrancy of Rahway as an arts center by harnessing its geographic advantages:
   - Proximity to New York City
   - Newark Airport
   - New Jersey Transit line downtown
   - Near Philadelphia, other major North East USA destinations

Debra-Secaucus, housing development, transit, target communities close to train
Joel Schwartz-Landmark-billboards advertising housing, promoting the arts?
   NO RESPONSE
From NY, Hoboken, other areas
Rebecca-where to advertise
Kevin O'Brien-what advertising did work
Kennedy-social media put us in higher level for UCPAC, much better than print ad
   DL Hughley concert at arts center, sold out twice in one night
Do people remember Rahway?
Debra-no press no write ups
Lawrence-Arts Guild-put on events that people want to attend
Mailing list
If you get people to come to Rahway how to capture them
Rebecca-hotel-
Kevin O'Brien-Shamrock-how to make visitors aware
Rebecca-data-60 apartments-actors fund, 1072 took survey, 68% said they would live in Rahway,
   30% from central/northern NJ, 30% Manhattan,
Lawrence-artists’ studio for a few hundred dollars / month
Meet me in Rahway,
NJ Transit,
Transit Village Program, 
Kennedy 11 arts districts in NJ, 
Live Nation-stats and data from their 
NYE-economy forced many to drop

**What is your calling for action? (optional)**

Harness other groups to jointly promote the arts in Rahway 
Study how to reach out and leverage the existing visitors/community to make a destination of Rahway
Session Report #24: How to Bring the World to Rahway

Convener: Len Vanderwende

Participants: Celesti Santana, Terry Benjamin, Rebecca Sauer, Tony Walker, Anthony Spaziani, Marc Miller, Shelly DeLuca-Caravella, Len Vanderende

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

1. Street Fairs
2. Build up First Thursdays – Showcase other events including Community ones
3. Community based Fairs / Events
4. Alumni Nights / Celebrity Events
5. Use of Deviant Art website
6. Culture Crawl & Tours
7. Progressive Dinner w/ cultural component (Guest Bartenders)
8. Artist Talks
9. Annual Hello Hamilton Event w/reasonable or dual prices
10. Cherry St Events (i.e. Harvest Festival, Pop-up Restaurants, etc)
11. “Sandy” Benefit
12. Ethnic Events
13. Church Events
Session Report #25: How to build a bridge between senior and youth.

Convener:

Participants: Asha Bryant, Eric W Miles, Shirley J Palmer, Anglea Pryor

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Start with preexisting organization such as Friends of the Rahway Public Library or Friends of UCPAC and/or faith based groups
- Identify Liaisons for different groups.
- Can focus around events
  - community service or volunteerism of youth at senior centers
  - Mentoring
- one on one or small group meetings

We hope that interchanges between youth and seniors will pass skills between groups and foster healthier and more respectful relationships.

Quality of Life issue
Recognize groups may not want to interact, but feel there will benefits.
Session Report #26: Keeping Gifted/Exception Children in the Rahway Schools

Convener: Kristine Farrar

Participants: Kristine Farrar, Angela Pryor, Margaret Cilia, Trish Volino, Stephanie Volino

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
Is the Rahway Board of Education knowledgeable of the reasons why students leave the district after they “graduate” from the elementary schools? The chronological age of these students is notoriously difficult – it is a “chaotic” period of life. We need more outreach for parents.

What is your calling for action? (optional)
Perhaps we need to make the appearance of the building more appealing. Orientation for the children and their parents needs to be done at an earlier age/time. By late spring of grade 6, parents have already made commitments to private/magnet schools. Expectations of Middle School need to made more openly. The Board of Education must make the concerted effort to find out who is leaving and why.
Session Report #27: Parade

Convener: Debra Partesi

Participants: Barbara Bilger, Angela Pryor, Rachael Faillace, Daniel Garay, Tricia Volino

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
- Celebrate 85th Anniv of UCPAC
- Tie in w/Culture Crawl?
- Sell Ticket or t-shirts that offer discounts at local businesses
- Christmas parade leading down Main Street to City Hall Tree lighting
- Downtown storefronts decoration contest-Prize sponsored by Chamber, RAD, etc.
- RHS chorus proceed as carolers
- RHS marching band in toy soldier costumes
- Mr and Mrs Claus in parade
- Horse drawn carriages
- Coupons/Discounts at local businesses for purchases/dinner after tree lighting
- Gift shops
- Services
- Restaurants
- Rahway’s Black Friday event
- Contact Rahway Alums through Facebook groups

What is your calling for action? (optional) Rachael, Daniel, and Tricia will create an itinerary and bounce idea off of Bob Van Wyck, Amara, and Zapcic.
Session Report #28: Parking Issue

Convener: Bobbi Fishman

Participants: David-Kims in the Mix, Celeste Santana, Gail Miller, Bobbi Fishman-Rail House 1449/Rail Yard Club Car, Colin Gittens, Joanna Miles, Vanessa Rozelle, Kristine De Jesus Farra…Shirley Palmer

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
The need for the Parking Authority to work out a viable plan along with all business owners and residents to entice visitors to frequent Rahway’s most important commodity…COMMERCE. The present Parking Meter situation is an absolute deterrent which results in a negative attitude toward the Rahway Downtown Business District. We are losing lucrative revenue to the business owner…which in turn will result in revenue loss to the community and the city. The chronic ticketing of all business owners and their patrons have made the customers reluctant to re-visit our town for fear that their stay in Rahway is MUCH MORE COSTLY than the purpose they actually came to our town to experience…ie restaurant…shopping etc. The $20 steak turns into a $55 night out (due to the $35 ticket they receive for missing the Quarter in the meter moment as the hour so quickly passes by)….NOT a great marketing campaign nor a recipe for success!!! EVERYONE LOSES!!!

What is your calling for action? (optional)
We are going to put a proposal together based on all our facts…feedback…and suggestions. We have brainstormed all the possible “Devil’s Advocate” comments and will try to make a concise PLAN OF ACTION to present to the Chamber of Commerce in hopes that they too…see our need for METER REFORM. There are many very simple solutions that will satisfy the Business owners without financially hurting the Parking Authority. Remember- the more we can inspire patrons to spend their money in Rahway- the more EVERYONE WINS!!!. This is a project that can come to fruition as long as we all work together with a unified goal in mind.
Session Report #29: Paying It Forward/Using creative recycling to beautify Rahway

Convener: Amy Thebodeau

Participants: Amy Thebodeau, Angela Pryor, Asha Bryant

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

Paying It Forward
- Who: anyone wanting to help or offering help
- What: helping assist anyone locally or through social media
- Where: online or in person
- Why: to advocate giving back
- How: network through churches, social groups
- Utilize Rahway Library, Chamber of Commerce, Rahway Arts District, and other community resources

Using creative recycling to beautify the Rahway Arts District
- Reach out to artists who repurpose materials to create artwork (recycled design) to create public art sculptures for Rahway (i.e. Jason Peters from “Culture Crawl”). Potential public spaces include: Rahway Train Station, Rahway Arts District Park, sidewalk space.
- Involve Rahway citizens and surrounding community members by asking for reusable materials (including but not limited to the following):
  - plastic bottles
  - soda cans
  - cardboard
  - signage
  - game pieces
  - playing cards
  - skate boards, snow boards, skis
  - wine corks
  - clothing pins
  - newspapers, magazines
  - extension cords
  - marker caps
  - scrap metal
  - keyboards
  - printer paper rolls
  - hangers
  - cassette tapes
  - bike gears
-wire
-paper clips
-rubber
-tires
-traffic cones
-utensils
-legos, building blocks
-styrofoam
-buttons
-tin cans
-yarn
-knobs
-toy parts
-milk crates
-cd’s, records
-athletic balls (tennis, baseball, etc…)
-egg cartons
-water hose
-foam
-cinder block
-cloth, quilt, clothing
-light bulbs
-vintage items
-chains
…a continued and infinite list of materials

This collection will serve as a resource for artists seeking unique materials to repurpose.
Session Report #30: How can we create practical & valuable business incentives & benefits that encourage and acknowledge shared exchange and shared prosperity?

Convener: Ennis Carter / Danni

Participants: Joanne Miles, Sondra Fishinger, Roberta Frimpter, Michelle McTamney, Tony Walker, Ennis Carter, Amy Phillips Garcia

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

- Leverage business assets across business sectors
- Use models from businesses like SCORE or BALLE (business alliance of local living economies)
- ISSUE: Starbucks syndrome; we only want Starbucks because they will bring people to Rahway; what’s in it for Starbucks? What are the shared benefits?
- ISSUE: If you’re not Starbucks it is difficult to figure out who to speak with regarding different ideas or to build cooperative relationships. No one is inviting you to open your small business in town.
- ACTION: Form a welcoming committee
  i. When you bring your business to Rahway, these are the people who you can meet with to guide you through what’s already here and what is happening. (This should be a subcontracted event planning business.)
  ii. This committee would create a concierge welcoming style
  iii. One stop shop of info about info for new businesses and new residents
- ACTION: Tax forgiveness program for new businesses
- ACTION: Welcoming wagon for new residence with coupons as incentives to visit new businesses.
- ACTION: change the mindset from competition to cooperation
- ISSUE: When you visit City Hall you are not greeted with a smile because there is this immediate perception that you are there to cause a problem.
- ISSUE: Current Mayor is not active in the community
- UPDATE: There is a fast food/chicken restaurant new business on Cherry Street serving a younger audience. How can we help them be successful?
- QUESTION: Regarding the new Rahway Redevelopment Agency, what is its purpose? Where did it come from? Where is it going?
- QUESTION: What are the criteria for asking someone to bring their business here? If a business does work for the City and their contract ends, is there a reason that business isn’t asked to set up shop in town?
- ACTION: We need relationship building from business to business.
- AVOID the nay-sayers. The answer shouldn’t be “I didn’t know that.” The answer should be “Now I know.”
- ACTION: Creative Rahway team should attend City Council meetings to represent the positive and creative ideas of Rahway.
- ACTION: We need to offer materials in Spanish.
- ACTION: Look at Rahway as an opportunity.
• ACTION: One on one interaction from business to business.
• ACTION: Support business to business (example: UC PAC always caters with restaurants from Rahway)
• ACTION: Creative Rahway team meet with SID/RAD people, Rahway Redevelopment, City Council
• QUESTION: How can we engage the commuter population coming off the train and make a bee-line home. How do we teach them what’s in Rahway?
• ACTION: A mural under the train trestle or on Hotel Indigo with images of a map of where things are with pics of buildings and people.
• ISSUE: people don’t know what they don’t know. How do we keep them informed or where can we guild them to learn more?
• ACTION: We need to change our “sensibility;” we need to take responsibility to be welcoming.
• ACTION: More lighting in Rahway from business to business. Light create a sense of safety.
• ACTION: Utilize the empty space on Cherry Street as a park and walkway with a mural
• SOME PEOPLE ARE ALREDY DOING IT: New photography studio on Cherry Street has a makeup artist in her studio and is coordinating with Amy to offer a Salsa lesson and then grab a drink at Patria. WE CAN DO MORE: Liberty Harley has a captive audience on Saturday mornings while biker owners have their bike repaired…“they can only shop for biker gear for so long..” Where do they go next? What is in town? What can they do?
Session Report #31: Creative Rahway for the Education Community: Student Mentoring

Convener: Vanessa Rozzelle

Participants: Margaret Cilia, Stephanie Volino, Gail Miller, Shirley Palmer, Michelle McTamney, Amy Thebodeu, Robert DiAnno

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
- Overview topics:
  - Internship Program
  - Senior talks to students
  - Career local businesses
  - Tour and visit local businesses

What is your calling for action? (optional)
- Target Group: students in after-school care grades k-6
- Visits from local businesses introducing students to their areas of expertise (example: Library, restaurants, Harley, Hamilton stage, petcare)
- 1 hour visit
- Give aways
- Creative Rahway passport (can be used for discounts at local business, signed by the guest speaker)
- Information about RFEE grant for funding

TIMELINE
- Speak to Superintendent
- Form subcommittees
- Identify the contacts for aftercare
- Identify business
- Complete calendar and schedule for visits

PHASE 2
- Senior talk: Senior citizens talk to students about their expertise
- Look at at-risk population
- Saturday programs at library
- Visits from SCORE on starting your own business
- Senior artist discussions
- Possible Saturday program taking place of in-school suspensions
- Read Across America concept

LAUNCH THE FIRST SESSION IN MARCH 2013
Session Report #32: What can be done to both support local business and arts while simultaneously showcasing Rahway to our region the country and the world. What worked in the past? What will work in the future?

Convener: Robert C. DiAnno

Participants: Tony M. Walker, Rodney Farrar, Michelle McTaminey

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

….I think it might be noteworthy to mention that all members of the panel other than me were bumble bees.

- The panel concluded that before we could talk about “show casing” Rahway, we should create a Rahway that’s a “show case” to talk about.
- Ways to achieve this might include grants, low/no interest loans, and tax breaks for businesses willing to make a steak in Rahway’s future.
- Of these topics, the tax credit was the most discussed, some were big proponents of the idea, others pointed out that if tax credits were to be granted at a municipal level, they should also see what would, be available at the county, state, and federal level as well.
- There was also some trepidation as to how the notion of tax credits for businesses would sit with individual tax payers.
- There is a lot to be said for grants and or low/no interest loans in addition to, and or in place of tax credits
- Other ideas included: Having a professional who focuses on the promotion of Rahway, its events, and businesses.
- It was suggested that The Rahway Center Arts, The Chamber of Commerce, or any other organization involving Rahway businesses should facilitate some kind of business and marketing class for their membership and encourage its membership tow to attend, so that they might learn how to create a more successful business environment. This approach has been tried before with mediocre results both in attendance, and results, but it’s not to say it shouldn’t be tried again. I found it interesting that the two “business” oriented panels that I sat on, both came up with some version of this idea, I did not bring up the notion, and no one else was on both panels. The bumble bees must have been busy with this one.
- There seemed to be something of a “chicken or the egg” approach to how to solve the problems discussed, I think this if far too prevalent in all avenues of today’s society; my answer is “both”.
- When the discussion started, it quickly streamed away from the theme I was trying to set, but that’s ok, I’m well aware of my own opinion and wanted to encourage an exchange of ideas, and see where it took us. I think we all learned something new, and gained prospective.
- Having said all that, my question still stands, Rahway has two or two or three events a year that are wildly successful and draw big crowds affording us the opportunity to showcase the town, Why not more?
- Events ranging from The Red bull Air Race (planes based out of Linden) to the possibilities of a formula one race in north Jersey, the summer Olympics in N.Y.C. sooner or later, not to mention the Super Bowl which WILL be in the region this time next year present us with opportunities. Large events such as these draw exponentially more people than those attending the actual events as spectators. Some are
looking for a less expensive way to attend, some may not like to stay in N.Y.C., for many reasons, there will be a large fringe contingency of people who will provide opportunities for commerce of all kinds. Shouldn't Rahway make at least a cursory attempt to tap into these markets?
Session Report #33: Can We Start a Community Theater?

**Convener:** Shelly De Luca-Caravella

**Participants:** Amy Thebodeau, Jim Kennedy, Sondra Fishinger, Amy Phillips

**Highlights & key points from your discussion:**

- How can we start and get a thriving community theater in Rahway?
- One where anyone who wants to participate in the show in some way can.
- Talked about looking into spaces and funding.
- Also how to become a resident company with the Union County Art Center.
- Can we do benefits and fundraisers?
Session Report #34: Sexy @ 60: Finding P.E.A.C.E.

Convener: Terry Benjamin

Participants: Jonathan Cloud, Senior Fellow Institute for Sustainable Enterprise

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
Translating P.E.A.C.E.

Passion…”To get beyond the mess we have made”…to make seniors more viable to our communities. “My passion is transforming attitudes toward nature”…to make peace with the planet.

Excellence…”to make this the best planet possible”…knowing we can’t do it alone, we need each other.

Attitude…”we are all a part of a community”

Creativity…”figuring out solutions to our problems.”

Energy….Go Green…”saving the planet through sustainability, solar panels”…thinking seriously about climate change.

What is your calling for action? (optional)

For everyone to learn the lessons from our past and senior citizens know the back story and needed to be included in the future. They can stay “sexy” by sharing their thoughts, feelings and ideas. And the community at large should encourage and develop forums for this input.
Session Report #35: What’s your idea of the perfect CHERRY?

Convener: Celeste Santana

Participants: Celeste Santana, Al Shipley, Roberta Frimpter, Bill Rack, Susana Reisinger, Jennifer Schiff, Tony M. Walker

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
The perfect Cherry Street will have (Each participant Idea):

- Restaurant Road/Food Court
  - Coffee House with Wifi
  - Fresh Bakery
  - Ice cream shop
- Better Image
  - Plants and Flowers
  - Hanging lighting on trees
  - Small tables
- Live Music (Jazz??)

Main Issues:

- Difficult to rent cause of the high rent
- A lot of the owners use their locations for tax write offs
- Lack of communication among the business owners and landlords

What is your calling for action? (optional)

- Host a series of events that can determine what works for Cherry Street
- The three main organizations in town should be responsible to coordinate/plan activities on cherry street, TOGETHER
- Create a solid MARKETING PLAN for Cherry Street
- Free consulting services for new business owners
- Apply for Grants to help beautify Cherry Street and the remaining of the income should come from business sponsorship (Ex. A business can sponsor a Plant and the maintenance of the plant)
- Implement a Maintenance Code (Have the business pledge to a more beautiful cherry street)
- Anchor Store
- Create a Info Hub/Billboard with upcoming events and attracts plus places of interests to visit in Rahway (Beneficial to the non-internet savvy)
- Meet/Greet point person for Cherry Street that can advise new business owner
- Create a campaign about Cherry Street
Session Report #36: What If...

Convener: Andrea Zapcic

Participants: Susana Reisinger, Jennifer Schiffel, Jeff Jotz, Shirley J. Palmer, Robert DiAnna

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
What If –
   Money wasn’t an object
       Could we get woodchips from DPW
       Would we have better lighting downtown
       Could we get compactor trash cans and/or “fun” cans (www.funtheory.com)

What if –
   People picked up their trash
       Can we enforce the no littering law?
       Can we get bottle/can reclamation?

What If –
   We had volunteers to plant flowers downtown (Garden Club)

What if –
   We had a reality TV show come to Rahway

What IF –
   There was some way to guarantee success to new businesses downtown?
       Rebate or incentive
       Incentives for property owners to keep up attractiveness & integrity of buildings

What If –
   30 years ago Rahway had affordable artist studio space?
       What if we could do it now? Wheatena building?
       What if fire/building codes were different?

What if we had a Welcome Wagon?

What if we could have a vibrant shopping center downtown?
   Bakery
   Coffee Shop
   Movie Theatre (or movies in the park)
   Marketing class for downtown businesses
What if we had a music festival downtown with a national act?
   Advertise on NJ Transit

What if we told our story better?
   First incorporated fire department in NJ
   Battle of Spanktown
   Washington Irving
   Carl Sagan
   Yacht Club
   The Unknown Woman
What if we had a Film Commission?
   Advertise in trade publications
   What if Steven Spielberg called?
   What if a movie was made about the Unknown Woman

WHAT IF WE COULD TAKE A NAP RIGHT NOW????
Session Report #37: Fine Arts Charter School

Convener:

Participants: Tricia Volino, Stephanie Volino, Michelle McTamney, Daniel Garay, Robert DiAnno, Collin Gittens

Highlights & key points from your discussion:

How can we make the Middle School Educational experience richer to keep more students in district for the High School

Would emphasizing our strengths at the middle school level actually increase the amount of students interested and desiring to major in the fine Arts?

Is there ways to use the Hamilton Stage to enhance the Academic experience of our Arts minded students?

How closely tied to the economic development of the town and the Arts district is the success of the schools.

High points and key points from your discussion

Test scores and the impact of the emphasis of instruction
   - parents in meeting disliked emphasis on test prep
Rubric learners versus critical thinkers: we should be focusing on “thinking outside the box”
Homework debate - is it redundant?
   - is it meaningful?
   - seems “ditto-like”, repetitive practice
Small business and school connections- Is the success of both dependent on each other?
   - people willing to mentor
   - how do we connect with the schools
   - when are meetings
   - respect for population, knowledge of population

Would a charter school help or hurt the present education system?
   - how many students are leaving the Elementaries to go to private
   - would a fine arts emphasis charter school inspire more students to stay in district for the high School
   - fine Arts charter school could play to our strengths in the town and at the high school

   - We should mirror the houses of the high school in STEM and Fine Arts
- frustration mounts by the end of 8th grade inspiring exodus regardless of academic offerings at the high school

Charter versus houses, ie. Fine Arts, STEM, Athletics, etc. sectors at the middle school level for a more nurturing feel, stronger focus for students

Lines of communication - Use of school message boards for arts & local business marketing
Continuing the conversation at the Town Meetings; let’s do this together: discuss how to link the success of our schools and community

Form a Creative Rahway for Education committee to continue to move forward.

What is your Call to action

Would a fine arts charter school be beneficial to Rahway?
Session Report #38: Increasing the Amount of Activity and Vitality on the Streets of the Downtown and extending that throughout the City

Convener: Joel Schwartz

Participants: Andrea Zapcic, Eric, Marisa Oregum, Colin, Jeff Zotz

Highlights & key points from your discussion:
Chickens and Eggs: What does one pursue first: Activities and Events … or … physical improvements to the streetscapes? If it is Activities/Events, how does one continue to sustain that over time, given the inevitable problems that arise, such as storm-Sandy damage to the Rec Center, which prevented the Christmas Crafts event and will crunch the Spring 2013 Taste? If it is physical improvements, what does one pursue: eliminating the negative, like trash, or enhancements like the quality/consistency of street trees?

People come to the City for an event: UCPAC concert, Arts-related activity, etc. We need to re-capture that people who comes for one reason, to get them to return, for another reason, again and again.

Street trees as an important visual that sends a message 24/7/365 about the City and the care/pride that people take in it. Towns in NJ that are perceived as especially desirable/high-value, etc., have a high quality street tree environment.

What are the issues that effect this single item (ie, street trees)? Dead dying trees, need to prune/maintain existing trees that are growing/mature/in good health. Example: tree crown that need to be pruned, so they don’t present too much “sail” for future storms and are at risk for blowing over.

Who will do these things? How does this relate to existing organizations like the Garden Club and or Dept Public Works? Who is best suited to do these things?

What effect have diseases and pests had on trees in Rahway? What to do, going forward? Need to get involvement of professional arborists for maintenance and planting. How to fund this?

How to get / how soon will we get: a food market? A coffee shop?

Parking phenomena: some people perceive “there is a parking problem in the downtown.” Is perception real? Another issue: after UCPAC concerts, attendees hurry to the parking garage to get their cars and leave town because they do not feel safe/comfortable. This is ironic, because the downtown is safer than ever, and also because the presence of people walking down Irving Street at night after a concert to get to the Parking Garage is a great thing: people on the street, eyes on the street at night (Jane Jacobs); ideally, there should
be appropriate establishments open for business for these strollers to capture them and promote more life on the street --- a lost opportunity if there are no such restaurants, bars, good hangout spaces.

What drives / does not driving whether we get and/or keep more retail space? Issues related to older retail space --- what makes it hard to fill these spaces? Urban legend: landlords would rather take tax-writeoffs rather than to do what needs to be done to fill these spaces.

Activities of groups like Friends of the Library: progressive dinners, etc.

Disconnects between the downtown and the rest of the City ---- long time residents that hardly come downtown. Perceptions of old-time Rahway folks about the good ol’ days downtown: why can’t it be like that again?

There is no one, single panacea ---- we must do many different things, many different approaches