

# Erie Downtown Partnership CEO Report

As we wrap up 2008, we should reflect upon the great things we have accomplished this year.

## ORGANIZATION:

- Expansion of the Board of Directors, 4 of which are nominated and elected by the EDP membership. This in return gives the EDP members more of a voice on the board of directors and direct involvement in the process of programming assessment dollars.
- We have extended our membership to constituents who work and/or live in the EDP boundaries, for \$10 a year they can be a voting EDP member and have many of the same privileges of property owners.
- The EDP Maintenance Crew have implemented new hours for the convenience of our members. Scott and Dhia are now on the streets from 7:30am-4pm Monday thru Friday. A new system is in place where we divide duties for efficiency. In the warmer months, one person is responsible for sweeping the entire district on a daily basis, while the other attends to other needs district wide including but not limited to pressure washing, weed pulling/trimming, alley cleaning, and emptying trash cans. During the winter months, instead of following one another while completing snow removal as they had done in the past, each person is responsible all of the snow removal for either the east or west side of the district. This has allowed us to respond faster to the snow removal needs of our members and address complaints if any are received in a more efficient manner. These changes, for the most part, have received a warm reception from the members.
- Finally completed and approved Job Descriptions, Employee Handbook and the offering of a retirement plan to the employees.

## GRANT AWARDS:

- We have been awarded the designation of Main Street Achiever by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).
- The Partnership has an outstanding \$101,000 Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PaDOT) grant to be used for Transportation Enhancements within our district including banners, trash containers, planters and benches.
- \$29,450.60 secured through two grants from the County of Erie Gaming Revenue. One grant being a \$25,000 operational grant for the Organization as a whole; the other a \$4,450.60 grant to offset expenses of Downtown d'LIGHTS.
- We have secured a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) in the amount of \$9,115 for the purchase and planting of 80 street trees within our district. We anticipate the award of matching funds from the MacKenzie Foundation out of Pittsburgh in the spring of 2009. Scott and Dhia attended an eight hour Tree Tenders course to learn the proper planting and pruning techniques so that they can maintain not only the trees we will plant in the spring but the existing street trees throughout our district.
- In 2008, the Partnership had brought back many non-profits who had stopped contributing to the organization in previous years. These include, but are not limited to the Erie Parking Authority, the Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority, the Civic Center Authority and the Erie Housing Authority.

## NEW INITIATIVES:

- The Promotions Committee has developed a gift certificate program, in which any business or service in the EDP boundaries can participate in for no cost. There are over 33 businesses who have participated, since inception in fall of 2008 we have reached sales above \$5,600.00
- Completion of two clean up events, with assistance from Coastal Zone Management and Waste Management. Our Team Up to Clean Up events have generated hundreds of volunteers to the Partnership to dedicate one day to removing litter and waste from our area. Data collected from these clean up efforts are also used in obtaining grants and assistance in additional trash receptacles. We plan on continuing these in 2009.

- Through a very generous offer from LAMAR Advertising we were able to institute a general awareness campaign of the EDP in the second quarter of 2008. We had billboards throughout the city/county which advertised not only our organization but ran a second billboard showcasing how we collaborate with the City, County, VisitERIE, Chamber, and Convention Center Authority. (As it related to GE Meeting and the Presidential Candidate stops in Erie.
- The City of Erie had included the Partnership in all aspects of the Master Planning Process of both Perry Square and Griswold Park. Both plans are completed and continue to look for funding to implement the plan recommendations.
- We partnered with the Gannon Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in providing an educational program focusing on the Dollars and Cents of Visual Merchandising. We underwrote some of the cost of the course, therefore class was free to our membership and SBDC members had to pay to attend.
- Through collaboration with WSEE, many of our downtown businesses were featured on their weekly Business Watch Series which focused on how independent downtown businesses have stayed competitive with the big-box national chains.
- In partnership with the Port Authority, we have created a walking map of both our district and the waterfront. Printing should be complete in February 2009 and the maps will be placed using both of our resources as well as those of VisitERIE.
- The Redevelopment Authority agreed to allow our Design Committee the right to review any façade improvements paid for by CDBG grants which are done within our boundaries. This will allow for coordination between our two façade programs.
- Completion of Inventory of Downtown Businesses.
- Pulled together a table for the Good Morning America stop in Erie. I was in Harrisburg that day, but from what I was told they were most interested in speaking with those who represented the EDP and that is what made it on the show.

CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION OF EXISTING PROGRAMMING:

- The development of Business to Business Mixers gives members the opportunity to visit neighbors business and get a feel for what all businesses in the Partnership have to offer. Mixers are open to all businesses in the district and run from September thru May.
- Participation in Week of Thanks with the United Way by gathering EDP businesses to support the cause in return bringing participants into our entertainment and retail district.
- All summer events were very successful and there were no organizational or police problems associated with any of them. While I had never attended the events in previous years, I have been told not only by Julie, but by City of Erie Police and participants in Buggin' State that attendance at all events far exceeded previous years. We often had to make mid-evening adjustments to accommodate the attendance, but those were easily accomplished with assistance by the City. An increase in attendance would also include Downtown d'LIGHTS.

