



## News Release

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### **Summit Downtown Had A Very Different, Challenging Year!**

As with everyone, Summit Downtown, Inc. (SDI) experienced unprecedented challenges in 2020 and rose to the occasion. Working in concert with the City of Summit, the businesses, and other organizations, SDI reports very different accomplishments than normal years.

SDI's mission is to manage the downtown district and work to help the businesses within the district with business assistance and recruitment, create events to bring people to town, and market the district to help promote it and the businesses. This past year changed much of what SDI could do, but the Board of Trustees and staff pivoted to spend their budgeted funds on different initiatives than usual.

Working with the City and the Summit Foundation, one of the first initiatives of the pandemic was to create a fundraising campaign to funnel cash grants to businesses to help them while they were forced to shut down or drastically change their practices. The wonderful generosity of Summit residents and friends had the Sustain Summit Fund raising \$372,000, which was later matched by an anonymous Summit donor who contributed another \$350,000 for a round two of Sustain Summit that was called Jumpstart Summit, offering larger grants to a smaller number of businesses. Over 120 businesses, city-wide, received grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$20,000 during the spring, which many have reported kept them from having to permanently shut down by being able to keep and pay staff, pay rent and other bills. Later in the summer, SDI donated \$16,000 in \$100 Summit VISA Gift Cards to businesses so they could either support their fellow businesses or use the money at their own business; this good will gesture served to not only support businesses but to offer a much-needed morale boost. SDI then received a grant from Main Street New Jersey for an additional \$120,000 in December enabling them to give out another round of \$1,000 grants. The businesses were extremely grateful to the Summit community for their financial and emotional support with these grant programs.

SDI also collaborated with the Summit Police Department to promote mask-wearing downtown. SDI provided 500 \$5 Summit VISA Gift Cards for the first round of rewarding young people downtown who were responsibly wearing their masks; SDI then provided another 500 \$10 gift cards for the police to reward older teens who were wearing masks.

SDI enabled a sense of normalcy by successfully opening the popular Summit Farmers Market for the 2020 season, only missing the first scheduled 2 weeks of the market. SDI worked with the city's Parking Services on moving the market from its home at DeForest Lot #2 to the larger Lot #1 in order to enable distancing for customers and vendors alike. While traditional events at the Farmers Market like Sunday Fundays and other special events had to be canceled, SDI

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was able to offer the vendors a way to keep selling and for area customers to continue to have access to fresh produce and foods.

SDI worked with the City of Summit to safely add 7 new parklets to enable restaurants to serve customers outdoors and even closed Maple Street, creating a very popular downtown square for several restaurants and bars. SDI purchased and installed Market lights throughout the downtown creating a welcoming environment that set an atmosphere for all the outdoor dining and lifted spirits of visitors too. SDI also partnered with Summit Public Art and the Summit House to have famous muralist Kelsey Montague paint a “What lifts you” interactive mural on the alley-side wall on the new Barbacoa on Maple Street sending hundreds of people taking their pictures with the wings and posting on social media.

To further support downtown businesses, SDI increased marketing by having social media contests like “See Summthing in Summit” and more online and print advertising. SDI also extended the popular sidewalk music performance event Summit Street Sounds at several locations downtown. Typically held Thursday & Friday evenings in June, it extended into July and then also for another 6 weeks in September/October drawing people downtown and lifting everyone’s spirits, including the musicians who hadn’t been able to play since the pandemic started.

SDI’s holiday events went on almost as normal following CDC masking and distancing guidelines allowing families to enjoy the holiday cheer with strolling carolers, brass musicians, horse & carriage rides and the new and very popular Hilltop Elf Scavenger Hunt! The City and SDI also provided FREE holiday parking again this past year.

On a more internal level, SDI regularly kept the businesses up to date on the ever-changing COVID-19 regulations and funding opportunities as they rolled out day by day, week by week and month by month during the pandemic. SDI assisted businesses by helping them with grant applications or connecting them to Summit residents who volunteered to help with grant applications and PPP funding.

Many businesses also gave back to the community partnering with FLAG (Front Line Appreciation Group) through purchases and donations to local first responders and front-line workers.

“Summit is an amazing community and the downtown businesses are lucky to have such a supportive community especially during this incredibly hard time,” said Bob Conway, owner of Brownie Points Bakery and Chair of Summit Downtown, Inc. “The SDI Board and staff have worked hard to do everything we can to keep downtown Summit strong and ready to rebound back to normal as soon as this pandemic is under control. In the meantime, we urge everyone to be safe and shop local!”

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