**Maplewood Village Alliance**

**2018 Annual Report**

**Summary**

In 2018 the MVA transitioned in a new SID manager and welcomed a new TC liaison, Dean Dafis, onto its board. While this transition was happening, the MVA also coordinated several events and promotions, participated in the DCA’s visioning plan, continued to build our social media campaigns, built relationships with the merchants, supported economic development, and paid particular attention to the Village’s parking challenges.

The MVA also provided administrative, communication and financial support for various Village-wide initiatives.

The MVA would like to thank the Township for their support in writing the grant which secured the DCA’s vision plan work and for funding the paver project which started in the fall and will begin again in late spring. Both of these efforts will greatly enhance the vibrancy of the Village and we appreciate it very much.

The MVA supported economic development which included welcoming a new business to town, Brave Floral, working with other exciting, soon to open businesses in the Village.

More specific information is noted below.

**Events and Promotions**

In 2018, the MVA organized and/or supported the following events and promotions:

* Girls Night Out
* Art Walk & Music Fest
* Halloween Parade
* Dickens Village
* Plaza Night
* Holiday Kick Off Girls Night Out
* Endless Summer promotion

**Girls Night Out**

GNO continues to be one of the Village’s best and most successful events. An estimated 500+ women visited the Village during GNO in June, many of which were from out of town.

Sponsors for the 5th year in a row were Allison Ziefert and Collette Andrews.

Even though GNO was the same night as the Rainbow Crosswalk celebration, that didn’t stop the crowds from finding their way to the Village. It was a perfect weather evening and everyone had a great time.

**Maplewood Art Walk**

In late September we held our 7th annual Art Walk & Music Fest. The weather was absolutely perfect the turnout was exceptional.

49 artists participated, several new to the event and from as far as Boston to participate. The community mural was once again a big hit with the kids. Five local bands played and families appreciated that Maplewood Avenue was closed so they could enjoy playing and dining on the street while they listened to music.

**Dickens Village**

Thanks to the continued dedication of the Dickens Committee, we once again enjoyed a very successful month of activities at Dickens Village. Ellen Davenport and Rosetta Weiser continue to work tirelessly to make this a great event. They do it all, which includes everything from making sure the houses get necessary renovations to coordinating and arranging the very popular Santa’s House, breakfast with Santa, tree lighting, Menorah lighting, petting zoo, horse and buggy rides, school choruses (brought in hundreds of kids and their families) ornament design, and last but not least, fundraising. The Dickens Village program relies on fundraising and the efforts of Ellen and Rosetta in that area are extremely commendable.

**Endless summer**

This was a promotion to keep people engaged with the Village during the slowest month of the year, August. It was a social media campaign where people were encouraged to take pictures while in town and post them, tagging MVA. The pics with the most likes on IG won a prize at the end of the month. Endless summer also included live music. Twice in August there was a one man show at the corner of Highland and Maplewood Avenue.

**Plaza Night**

Plaza night was born out of a recommendation from the folks at the DCA. We converted the parking lot between Village Coffee and BCB Bank into a “plaza” complete with string lights, heaters, fire pit, tables and chairs and a live band. People were encouraged to get some take out, grab a bottle of wine and eat al fresco while they listen to music. Even though it was short notice and in November (chilly!) it was still a big success. An estimated 60-70 people came out, many right off the train who saw it and called their family to meet them. People loved the string lights so we left them up and are hoping to string more throughout town.

**Holiday Kick Off Girls Night Out**

This event was created to combat the construction blues that the merchants were feeling during the first phase of the bump outs and paver project. It was a light version of the summer girls night out…no DJ, no branded bags, no shop to win promotion, but it was still a successful night. Merchants had fun things going on in their stores, it was heavily promoted and people came out. A nice way to kick off the season.

**Infrastructure:**

**Parking**

As our town grows, so does the Village’s parking challenges. The MVA continues to work alongside the Township on this subject.

A parking committee was created to discuss, develop and implement strategies to help ease the parking challenge.

A parking study was conducted by a valet company.

As a result of their findings, we hired a marketing/PR firm to work on messaging in order to get people to use the underutilized parking on Dunnell Road and Maplewood Avenue in the evenings and on weekends.

We are in the thick of the process now and will have a new expanded parking map and a campaign of action items to help get the messaging out about these underutilized areas.

Parking times in lots were changed to eliminate employees parking in lots and encourage car changeover and to build consistency in parking times throughout the Village.

We continued to listen to the people and think future and bigger picture when it comes to parking. But for now, we will work with these strategies.

The merchant parking program continues to be a popular program among merchants and their employees.

**Façade Grants**

The annual Façade Grant program awarded $5,000 to the following businesses:

Chaise Fitness, A Paper Hat, Photobooth Studios and The Cassidy. To date, the Façade Grant Program has awarded at total of $93,000 to merchants and property owners in the last 18 years.

**Lot 7**

Lot 7, behind Arturo’s, got a makeover and had a ribbon cutting in fall of 2018.

**Marketing**

The Alliance continued promotion and use of its social media platforms and website as a hub for communicating Village events and news.

Our social media platforms of Facebook and Instagram continue to be key in raising awareness of the Village and engaging people in Maplewood and beyond.

The Alliance’s social media accounts have evolved into our most important communication vehicles.

Our Instagram account grew significantly in 2018, from just over 600 followers in late 2017 to 2,100 followers now!

On Facebook, we recently hit 2,000 ‘likes.’

**Economic Development**

The Village welcomed two new businesses in 2018: Brave Floral and A Paper Hat, both on Baker Street. There are also two new businesses scheduled to open early spring: Chaise Fitness and Ani Ramen. Luna Stella at 5 Highland Place continues its extensive renovations and is aiming to open soon.

The Alliance supported these new businesses and owners through design review and consultation for façade renovations, façade-grant awards, ribbon cutting ceremonies, and integration into ongoing events and promotions.