

PRESS RELEASE

BOROUGH OF DUNELLEN LAUNCHES COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN

Dunellen, NJ – Dunellen Mayor Jason Cilento and the Dunellen Borough Council approved plans for a temporary pop up park and measures to encourage outdoor dining and outdoor merchant displays by unanimous vote on Monday, April 5, 2021. A majority of Dunellen’s downtown is home to generational, mom & pop and independently run businesses which have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of these businesses is an integral part of Dunellen’s local economy and social fabric of the borough. These actions will hopefully encourage economic growth for local businesses.

The 2020 Downtown Dunellen Visual Preference Survey revealed overwhelming support for a pop up park on North Avenue. A pop up park is a low-cost, high-impact project which transforms an underutilized outdoor space and can last a day, weeks or months. Borough planner Francis Reiner of DMR Architects stated, “This low-cost initiative would provide benefits to the community. The park could provide activities such as music, yoga, food events, movie nights and children activities throughout the spring, summer and into the fall season.” Mr. Reiner recommended using a 30’x60’ section of the Borough employee parking lot at the corner of North Avenue and Prospect Avenue for this placemaking effort. Mayor Cilento and an appointed ad hoc committee of volunteers are developing plans to open the pop up park for the months of June through September 2021. The space will be surrounded by barricades on the north, east and south sides to control circulation and will be furnished with flower planter boxes and/or tree planters, which will help delineate and soften the space’s edges. There will be seating and tables and with the possibility of overhead solar string lights. “We will be inviting local businesses and organizations to use the space to hold open classes or programs,” Mayor Cilento said. He added, “We want to see the pop up park active and full of life. We hope it will also serve as another option for businesses to expand their services to the outdoors to make everyone feel safer during this pandemic.” Dunellen residents, business owners and organizations can contact the Borough Clerk’s Office at (732) 968-3033 if they are interested in donating materials or volunteering to help build seating or planters for the space. If Dunellen businesses or organizations are interested in scheduling time to use the space once it is open, please contact Parks and Recreation Director Alex Miller at (732) 968-3033, x8 or amiller@dunellenborough.com.

Approved Resolution 04-05-2021: #12 also outlines the temporary relaxation of existing ordinances and procedures allowing for outdoor dining and outdoor displays and can be found at dunellen-nj.gov. To encourage business owners to provide more outdoor dining options and to take advantage of sidewalk space for outdoor displays, Borough Administrator William Robins explained, “These temporary, practical measures in the resolution enable restaurants and retail merchants to augment their indoor capabilities as a means to boost customer activity.” Specifically, the Borough is waiving the annual outdoor dining permit fee; any fees already paid for this year will be credited towards a 2022 permit fee. The Borough is encouraging restaurants to use parts of their parking lots for expanded outdoor dining as well as available public spaces by arrangement with the Borough. The Borough is also encouraging sidewalk retail sales and businesses with type “32” and “33” liquor licenses to request to extend their premises to the restaurants’ parking lot/sidewalk dining spaces. Questions regarding how to submit “The Outdoor Dining or Sidewalk Cafes Application” can be made to the Borough Clerk’s Office at (732) 968-3033. To learn more about what’s going on in downtown Dunellen, contact dunellenmanagement@dunellenborough.com to receive the monthly Next Stop! Dunellen e-newsletter.