

Project Pop-Up brings new businesses to Delaware downtowns

Great opportunity for entrepreneurs in Milford, Milton, Smyrna and Dover

DOVER, Del. (Oct. 15, 2013) – Once-vacant properties in four Delaware downtowns have been transformed into wellsprings of opportunity thanks to a state-run program offering small business owners a head start in brick-and-mortar locations.

Project Pop-Up 2013 has provided three months of rent-free retail space to five total businesses in Milford, Milton, Smyrna and Dover. The program, a joint effort of the Delaware Economic Development Office and local stakeholders in these towns, also offers assistance from a business advisor.

Three of the Pop-Up businesses held grand openings this week attended by Alan Levin, Director of the Delaware Economic Development Office; Diane Laird, State Coordinator for Downtown Delaware; Ken Anderson, Project Pop-Up Business Advisor and DEDO's Director of Entrepreneurial & Small Business Support; and other state and local officials.

"Project Pop-Up demonstrates why small business is a big driver for Delaware's economy," Gov. Jack Markell said. "The success of this program underscores the fact that there are entrepreneurs who want a shot at starting and growing businesses, and downtown communities have a home for them."

The goal of Project Pop-Up is to fill vacant properties in Delaware's downtowns during the holiday season. But unlike Pop-Up programs in other cities across the country, the First State's program encourages small business owners to sign long-term leases.

This year's businesses are as follows:

- Milford Massage, Wellness and Yoga, 127 NW Front St., Milford. Owner Paige Deiner provides massage, Reiki, yoga and self-development classes in her 766-square-foot location off historic Front Street in the recently restored Governor William Tharp Building.
- 302 Fitness, 113 Union St., Unit A, Milton. The personal training studio and small group workout center, owned by John Lehne, offers fully customized training plans and group workouts such as yoga, boot camps, circuit training and more in its 1,100-square-foot-space.
- Royal Treatments, 14 S. Main St., Smyrna. Karen Gill's business offers custom window treatments, home décor and accessories in a 1,200-square-foot space.
- Computers Fixed Today, 131 W. Loockerman St., Dover. The computer retail and repair business, owned by Theo Morgan, sells laptops and other computer equipment and provides services such as virus removal and network installation set-up.
- Milton Wellness Center of Delaware, 113 Union St., Unit B, Milton. The business, owned by Dr. Bill Shearer and Mary Van House, offers human performance consulting including yoga, coaching and sports psychology.

"We are proud to offer this program as an incentive for these entrepreneurs, but they are the ones who took the leap, and for that we applaud them," Levin said. "It's great to see an infusion of new businesses and fresh faces and ideas in some of Delaware's most historic downtowns."

Last year's inaugural Project Pop-Up helped two business owners sign leases beyond the three months of free rent.

This year, all selectees have signed leases that will allow them to make a smooth transition to paid occupancy beginning Jan. 1, 2014.

“We had property owners looking beyond the three-month trial period long before they officially moved in,” said Diane Laird, State Coordinator for Downtown Delaware. “Not only are these towns getting new businesses, they’re also getting devoted business owners who are in this for the long-haul.”

About the Delaware Economic Development Office

The Delaware Economic Development Office is an executive state agency responsible for attracting new investors and businesses to the state, promoting the expansion of existing industry, assisting small and minority-owned businesses, promoting and developing tourism and creating new and improved employment opportunities for all citizens of the State. Visit dedo.delaware.gov.

About Downtown Delaware

Downtown Delaware, a program of the Delaware Economic Development Office, provides Delaware’s historic downtowns, communities, and small businesses with tools to revitalize their commercial districts, increase entrepreneurial opportunity, and enhance quality of place. To learn more about the Main Street program, visit www.delawaremainstreet.com.