



Good for Business

Deptford Township has expanded its horizons.

[By Liz Hunter]

Before 1975, Deptford's most well-known landmark was the landing spot for America's first hot air balloon ride. In 1793, Jean Pierre Blanchard took off from Philadelphia in front of an audience that included President George Washington and landed 46 minutes later in a Deptford clearing.

But when the Deptford Mall opened in August of 1975, it truly put the suburban farming community on the map, transforming it into a shopping mecca and launching an explosion of retail and restaurant establishments that is still expanding 40 years later.

DIVERSIFIED DEVELOPMENT

Deptford's ability to attract some of the nation's most well-known brands comes as no surprise to its mayor of nine years, Paul Medany. "I grew up in Deptford and I love it just as much now as I did then," he says. "The expansion of food and retail businesses has brought a

lot of progress, and honestly, I'm surprised it didn't happen sooner."

Medany cites Deptford's proximity to Philadelphia and the 295 corridor as a major draw for businesses. For instance, Deptford's population is approximately 31,000, but on any given day it sees nearly three times that number in visitors, reaching a high of about 200,000 during peak holiday season.

Today, the Deptford Mall, which is one of the top performing malls on the East Coast, has become the business engine of the township, if not the county, says Medany. But that's not the only place growth and success have occurred.

One of the newest additions to Deptford's business landscape is the Deptford Town Center. Built on a vacant piece of prime real estate across from the mall, the space was formerly home to shops and a movie theater, but once the theater closed it became an eyesore. The new town center is now home to Bed Bath & Beyond, Buy Buy Baby, Christmas Tree Shops and Harmon Face Values.

"We knew it was important to get this piece of land filled. We don't want to see vacant commercial space in town," Medany says. Other recently opened stores include Bob's Furniture and a 60,000-square-foot Burlington Coat Factory.

Other projects and collaborations outside of commercial development have helped generate jobs.

The PSE&G solar farm on the nearly 35 acre Kinsley Landfill took a challenging use and turned it into something productive. "We were approached by PSE&G and Transtech Industries with this idea," Medany says. "They were great partners to work with." According to Dan Edwards, CEO of Transtech Industries, Inc., and Kinsley Landfill president, approximately 100 jobs were created by the project, including electricians, engineers, heavy equipment operators, ironworkers, laborers and truck drivers.

The finished product is more than 30,000 solar panels that provide power to thousands of homes.

Rowan College at Gloucester County, formerly Gloucester County College, is a new partnership that allows RCGC credit to transfer directly to a degree from Rowan. Mayor Medany says, "Now you can pretty much go from pre-K all the way through college without leaving Deptford Township."

The Scott Hall building was recently designated as the college's STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) Center, which means all students pursuing degrees in those fields will attend classes at this location. Fred Keating, RCGC president, says the col-



FACTS/FIGURES

300

Number of employees at Reliable Home Care Services—the township's largest private employer

100

No. of jobs created by the Kinsley Solar Farm installation

36,841

No. of solar panels on the Kinsley Solar Farm, according to PSEG.com

15,000

Approximate enrollment of full and part-time students at RCGC

\$241,000,000

Price paid for the Deptford Mall by Macerich in 2007

1,069,657

Square Feet
Gross leasable space at the Deptford Mall

11

No. of major roadways, including 295 and the Turnpike, that crisscross in or near the township

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—Paul Medany, Mayor

lege is working closely with businesses in the area and chambers of commerce on workforce investment.

“We’ve watched the Deptford area grow tremendously and we are looking to enhance student participation, getting them exposure in the real world, through co-ops, internships and hands-on training,” Keating says.

He believes the degrees students are pursuing are in line with jobs that will be in demand, especially in the medical field. It has been reported that a center operated by Nemours will soon break ground in Deptford. “There are medical institutions looking to come into Deptford and we believe there is a future for an ‘eds and meds’ corridor,” he says.

Yet despite all of these signs of expansion, Medany says Deptford is still missing one thing that would not only generate jobs, but make residents happy: a supermarket. “I get more calls asking when we’re going to get a supermarket than for any other issue,” he says. “We are in desperate need of a supermarket, and I’m stumped why one hasn’t come in. People are demanding it.”



POSITIVE BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Deptford’s town council has become particularly popular among business owners who feel the mayor and other council members are truly looking out for their best interests.

Several years ago Medany formed a business advisory council where he invited business owners or representatives to come to the township building and have lunch with council.

“These meetings are an opportunity for us to listen to their concerns, and also teach

them about the town budget and show them where their tax money goes,” he says. Some joint accomplishments include working with NJDOT to get the traffic flowing more efficiently around the mall, and just last year the council hosted a representative from the State Attorney General’s office who presented a code enforcement class to all businesses with a liquor license.

Charlie Kirchner, who has owned the Deptford Skating and Fun Center for almost 30 years, says the mayor’s initiative has been extremely successful. “It has been exciting to see the transformation of the business landscape in the past few years,” he says. “The mayor really has his finger on the pulse of what’s happening in the business community. I have businesses in other townships, and Deptford really puts in the extra effort for the business owners here.”

“We’re proud of the attraction Deptford has for businesses,” says Medany. “We do our best to fill up empty commercial space as quickly as we can. We see our business owners as neighbors and treat them like residents since many of them spend more time here than at home. Anything we can do to help them become successful we’ll do.”

What Businesses Are Saying

Local companies tell us what it's like to do business in Deptford.

SJFCU

Headquartered in Deptford, the South Jersey Federal Credit Union (SJFCU) is marking its 26th year as a business presence in the township. It opened a new 30,000-square-foot LEED-certified corporate center in 2009 where more than half of SJFCU's 120-person staff works.

"South Jersey Federal Credit Union is all about giving unparalleled service to its members, and Deptford Township strives to provide its residents—and its many businesses—with great municipal services," says Kenneth Barnshaw, SJFCU vice president-governmental affairs.

Columbia Bank

Columbia Bank has had a presence in the Deptford community for 25 years and count-

ing and is an active member of the area's business organizations.

"The growth [in Deptford] is bringing more customers to the existing businesses and helping us grow as well," says Kimberly Nolan, financial services officer at Columbia Bank. "The new business owners are welcomed by and encouraged to participate in supporting each other as well as the community through the Advisory Committee, Rotary Club of Deptford and other civic organizations."

Transtech Industries

In 2014 Transtech Industries transformed Deptford's 35 acre Kinsley Landfill into a solar energy farm.

"This [partnership] is a classic case of successful public policy intersecting posi-

tively with a progressive, well-managed New Jersey municipality," says Dan Edwards, CEO of Transtech. "Not only from the perspective of work and job creation, but in long-term environmental protection and attainment of renewable energy goals."

Auletto's

Perched on Almonesson Lake, Auletto's hosts social and business functions including weddings and meetings for local business organizations such as the chambers of commerce.

"When my father purchased this business Deptford was a quiet town. It has continued to get busier since adding the mall. The difference now is that people know where Deptford is," says owner Jim Auletto.

Deptford Mall

Seen as the spark that started it all, Deptford Mall has kept its relevancy with its willingness to evolve.

Jim Mackey, senior manager of property management for Macerich (the mall's owner), says, "We pride ourselves in thoroughly understanding our market and are always changing the shopping environment and merchandising to meet the needs of our

shopper. In the past couple of years we have spent millions of dollars in upgrading the interior of the mall and have brought in some exciting new national brands."

Compass Self Storage

Nationally known Compass Self Storage operates a location in Deptford, serving the tri-state area.

Debbie Dukes, GM, says, "This town is generally concerned about the success of each and every business in Deptford. They have implemented a Buy Deptford Business First program in an effort to keep business local. It is so easy to give to a town that never stops giving back."

Filomena Lakeview

One of Deptford's most historic places, Filomena's was originally a stage coach stop for travelers in the 1700s and is now a popular Italian restaurant and bar that hosts weekly rotary meetings.

"Deptford is a great place to do business," says owner Mario DiVentura. "The township is always willing to work with us and does their best to accommodate us. There are a lot of nice things happening in Deptford." ▶

