

# BE!

Rochester  
Downtown  
Alliance  
Stakeholder  
Newsletter:  
  
The Place to Be  
Informed!

RDA | Newsletter

March, 2015

## From Executive Director Jenna **Bowman**

As the temperatures warm, the energy and activity at the RDA office continues to grow. We are now fully staffed and are tackling all that is on the 2015 calendar. As we concluded all of our 2014 activities, I am pleased to share that through all of our events and activities the RDA impacted over **368,000 people**. This includes residents, visitors, downtown employees and more. The 2015 year has started strong, with **SocialICE** a success on a number of fronts. This included a 7.2% growth in attendance, with over 46,000 attending the event over the three-day span. We saw substantial growth in our social media channels, with year over year percentages being **surpassed by 50%-200%**. This is representative of the focus the RDA is



Above: Peace Plaza during SocialICE

placing on truly marketing our events and activities. We also saw an expansion in our partnerships, with our ability to engage with the YMCA and Rochester International Airport. These partnerships reflect a focus on being strategic and creative with how we collaborate.

In addition to marketing our events and activities, we are improving the information we have available to the community and to you, our stakeholders. We are aware we have an opportunity to share our story and impact in a more meaningful and powerful way. This is especially true as we look back on the past 10 years. As you will read in the newsletter, the RDA is in the process of seeking renewal as a **Special Service District**. This process was last completed in

...story continues on pg. 2 under "From the E.D."

— Jenna **Bowman**,  
RDA Executive Director

## in the **issue...**

**RDA Featured Stakeholder Series:**  
Bruce & Brenda Dahlstrom, Hershey's  
pg. 2

**SOCIALICE**  
— ROCHESTER MINNESOTA'S ICE BAR —

#SocialICE Goes Sky High!  
pg. 5

**From the Chair:**  
Meet our new Board of Directors Chair Dan C. Aguilar  
pg. 6





Laura Engelman joined the RDA on January 5, 2015. A native of St. Cloud, MN, Laura spent the last year and a half as the Coordinator of Student Events & Programs at the University of Memphis in Tennessee. She holds a Bachelor's of

# on board:

## Laura Engelman joins RDA staff as Community Engagement Manager

Science in Marketing from St. Cloud State University and a Masters of Education in Educational Leadership from North Dakota State University.

Laura is no stranger to working in a downtown environment. She was an Events & Marketing Intern with the Minneapolis Downtown Council – working on events like

the Minneapolis Aquatennial. In addition, she has a great wealth of knowledge when it comes to event operations and logistics.

“Laura is a solid addition to the RDA team,” says Jenna Bowman, RDA Executive Director. “She brings the right balance of experience, leadership and passion to the position. As the Community Engagement Manager, Laura will be filling an important leadership role for the community and the organization. I look forward to continuing to work with Laura and see all that she brings to this community.”

Engelman is also excited for the adventures that lie ahead.

“I am beyond thrilled to be part of the RDA team,” says Engelman. “It’s great to be back in MN, after spending almost two years in Tennessee. I have already met so many influential people in the city of Rochester, and I am excited to continue making relationships as I settle into the City and this position. I look forward to a great Thursdays season, and the RDA’s year ahead!”

## from the E.D.

...continued from pg. 1

2009. Reading on, you will be provided with information about the renewal process, and there will be multiple ways to engage.

This is an exciting time both at the RDA and in downtown Rochester. We are enthusiastic about the opportunity this year will offer. 2015 will be a year of continued transition, as the RDA staff continues to get settled into their roles and looks to build contacts, partnerships and relationships. As always, I encourage you to get involved, to stay informed and to connect with us.

The RDA staff is working hard on all that is ahead. One aspect of that is our full events calendar. As you see to the right, we have our known signature events, as well as the addition of Dogs Downtown. This first-time event will take place in early August. The focus is to highlight what downtown

Rochester has to offer to our four-legged friends. We are excited about the opportunity to create new partnerships. In addition to these events, we will be focusing on creating unique ways to highlight the downtown experience throughout this summer.

### » What's Ahead in 2015 ●●●●

- Movies on the Plaza  
- June, July & August
- Thursdays on first & 3rd  
- June 4th - August 27th
- NEW - RedBall Project Rochester  
- June 6th - June 12th
- NEW - Dogs Downtown  
- August 2nd
- Style on the Plaza  
- September 17th
- Small Business Saturday  
- November 28th



Above: Jenna Bowman, RDA Executive Director



# RDA FEATURED STAKEHOLDER SERIES

with Bruce & Brenda  
Dahlstrom of Hers

Stakeholders are the personality of Downtown Rochester, and that got us thinking, "We bet there are some interesting stories out there." So the RDA sat down with Downtown Rochester stakeholders Bruce and Brenda Dahlstrom, owners of Hers women's clothing stores, with one objective: "Tell us about yourself."

*You own two Hers clothing stores downtown. How long have they been around?*

B&B: The Hers store in the Kahler/Peace Plaza opened in 1983 and the Hers store in The Shops at University Square opened in 1989.

*What lead to starting the business?*

Bruce: My parents opened our first retail store in Rochester in 1980 after my dad worked for the Dayton Hudson Corporation for 18 years.

*What is it like being a business owner of Hers clothing stores?*

Bruce: It's rewarding to see our customers respond to the cutting edge fashion that we bring to our stores.

*Any interesting stories from being a business owner?*

Bruce: We were the first local business to sign a lease at University Square (formerly Galleria). Our first location was where Counterpoint Home currently is. We moved into a newly created space that had been a four story atrium.

*You recently remodeled your store, correct? What do you think?*  
B&B: We love how the store turned out! We added new wood floors, accents of corrugated tin, stacked stone, granite, reclaimed wood, plus everything was freshly painted.

*What's the best part about owning a business together?*

Brenda: We get to work side by side everyday and get to travel to the markets together.

*What's the hardest thing about owning a business together?*

Brenda: We "have" to work with each other everyday!

*Is there a "His" and Hers in the future?*

Brenda: We get asked that everyday and the answer is "no." Our work load is busy enough!

*What do you think the biggest change will be to downtown in the next 20 years?*

Brenda: The choices for shopping, dining, and hotels will be dramatically increased.

*What changes do you look forward to most?*

B&B: The expansion of The Shops of University Square.

*And most importantly, who is your favorite comic book character or super hero?*

Brenda: Iron Man, because Tony Stark is very powerful and "cute"!

*The RDA Featured Stakeholder Series takes a look into the life and business of a Downtown Rochester stakeholder. A downtown stakeholder represents property owners, business leaders, city officials, and others with a direct stake in the enhanced business and economic development condition in the downtown special service district.*







## HIGHLIGHTS

... hosted by the Rochester YMCA, the Walk of ICE, and even free trolley rides to and from the event to their favorite downtown bars. Although it was cold outside, competition heated up the night with bars vying for the first ever Ice Bar Champion's Cup.



**SocialICE Selfies!** SocialICE, with its wide array of ice sculptures and unique ambiance, is the perfect backdrop for any photo op.

**Over 46,000 in Attendance:** The Peace Plaza was packed with SocialICE enthusiasts during the three-day event.

**Live Entertainment:** SocialICE featured **DJ Elsewhere & DJ Slipp** with **Hair of the Dog** and **White Iron Band** live in the Skyway.

# SOCIALICE

## Rochester MN's Ice Bar

Bring the cold, bring the crowds. Seventh Annual SocialICE brings record attendees to the Peace Plaza.

On Feb. 19-21, Rochester came out to enjoy SocialICE 2015 located in Downtown Rochester. The event featured seven uniquely themed ice bars, each operated by downtown establishments. Patrons could enjoy the bars, kid's activities,

... Continues above in "HIGHLIGHTS"

## CONTESTS

The **#SocialICE** Photo Contest garnered social media engagement results like we've never seen before. 2015 also saw the introduction of the **First Annual SocialICE Ice Bar Champion's Cup** where attendees had the chance to vote for their favorite ice bar theme. This year's winners: **Kathy's Pub**

**#SocialICE Photo Contest:** Partnering with the **Rochester International Airport**, attendees could enter for a chance to win two airline tickets and downtown gift cards. We saw 688 posts with a total reach of 264,390 (vs 260 posts / 36,000 reach in 2014)!

**A Whole Lotta ICE:** The Walk of ICE featured 26 ice sculptures from local businesses. Attendees were also treated to live ice carving demonstrations.



# RDA | BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*The Rochester Downtown Alliance houses a diverse and eclectic BOD comprised of business owners, entrepreneurs, and downtown stakeholders.*

**Dan C. Aguilar**  
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coming up...



Starts  
June 4



#RedBallProject  
Rochester  
June 6 - 12





## Themed Thursdays:

2015 will see the introduction of Themed Thursdays. Market begins June 4.



## THEMES

- June 11: RedBall
- July 2: Red, White, and Blue
- July 16: The Great Outdoors
- July 30: Youth Day
- August 6: Wellness
- August 20: Pay it Forward



# Thursdays on First and 3rd



I love the online application process; very professional, and organized well!

- Vendor applicant

**2015 UPDATES** The RDA was very excited to streamline the Vendor Application this year by creating an online application process – receiving over 190 applicants. The hosting site, Manage My Market, will allow the RDA to easily manage applicant information, photos, and communication. Another great feature of the site is an interactive market map that Thursdays on First & 3rd vendors and attendees can utilize each week before, during, and after the market.

Following a year-long community study, on February 17, 2005, the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA) was incorporated as a Minnesota non-profit to help establish and maintain a special service district in downtown Rochester. The district's boundaries cover approximately 44 blocks and encompass much of the city's downtown. The RDA celebrates 10 years of contributions in 2015. This year also marks the RDA's renewal year. What does this mean? It means the organization is seeking support to continue the efforts of the organization. More information regarding the renewal will be shared in the coming weeks. As we look to the future, it is important to highlight some of the accomplishments of the past 10 years.

### Facade Improvement Program

This program started in 2010 and is a partnership with the City of Rochester. Since it began, there has been almost \$500,000 provided in grant funding – totaling close to \$1.7 million invested into facade improvements within the 44-block area.

### Downtown Cultural Initiatives Grant

This program began in 2013 and over the past two years, over 40 grants have been awarded, which has helped build the vibrancy and activities available in downtown Rochester.

### About You

This Community Assessment Inventory, which took place between 2011 and 2012, provided insight into areas like arts and culture, diversity and inclusion and talent and creative talent. Over

2,500 surveys were taken to secure information that allowed the RDA and the community to better understand these important topics.

**RDA Core Events** – The RDA has played a key role in building and expanding the vibrancy of downtown Rochester. One of the key ways this has been done is through events like **SocialICE, Thursdays on first & 3rd, Movies on the Plaza and STYLE on the Plaza**. These events help engage over 300,000 people into downtown each year.

These are just a few of the many of things the RDA has led and contributed to over the past 10 years. Please watch for more information about the Special Service District renewal process and help ensure the RDA is able to do this meaningful work for the next 10 years.

# SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICT RENEWAL



# #REDBALLPROJECT

Rochester Artist Kurt Perschke's RedBall Project is a

sculptural art installation traveling around the globe to cities such as Paris, Sydney, and Abu Dhabi. Each city itself becomes a canvas of potential as the work searches for new opportunities.

**THE BIG RED BALL** The RedBall is 15 feet tall, 250 pounds with or without air, and can be inflated & deflated in approximately 15 minutes. The RedBall is staffed through set-up, exhibition, and tear-down at each site.

**REDBALLPROJECT ROCHESTER** The RedBall will be placed in 7 unique locations in Downtown Rochester – more to come, so be on the lookout! Rochester marks the first city in the US in over a decade—making its US return!

**HOW TO GET INVOLVED** Be creative and think of ways that your organization can interact with the RedBall Project to help make this a great experience for Rochester residents & visitors! For more information on how to plan your event, please contact Karli McElroy with the Rochester Downtown Alliance: [kmcelroy@rdowntownalliance.com](mailto:kmcelroy@rdowntownalliance.com).



RedBall Toronto - Site Study - AGO Toronto 1/2 | Ink, watercolor, and collage 38x112 cm unframed, signed and titled on verso

June 6-12, 2015—Downtown Rochester



FROM THE  
CHAIR

Board Chair  
Dan C. Aguilar  
talks transition  
and looks  
forward to the  
future of the RDA

Dear Friends of the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA),  
It is a great honor to serve as your Chairman. Along with our outstanding staff, generous volunteers and dedicated board members, our organization represents a network of businesses and individuals working together to build a vibrant local community.

This year celebrates our 10th anniversary and what an incredible story to tell! Each new year has brought record attendance to our events, new and exciting businesses, and more places to live, all of which

have expanded the vision of what we imagined could be accomplished downtown in such a short period of time.

I want to thank each of you for your hard work and your ongoing commitment to our mission here at the RDA. As your Chairman, I am eager to support our shared vision for more experiences, collaboration, and communication of our happenings. Your thoughts are instrumental to the vitality of our organization, and I look forward to many thoughtful, candid conversations during my tenure.

- Dan C. Aguilar





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## DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER GIFT CARD UPDATE

The holiday shopping season ushered growth both in sales and participating downtown businesses for the Downtown Rochester Gift Card Program.

**On-hand Inventory:** The RDA sold on-hand quantities of the downtown gift card on select dates during the holiday season increasing sales.

**Increase YOY Sales:**  
With Q4 sales reaching over \$5,000, the gift card program ended Q4 with 15% sales growth Year Over Year.

**Business Participation:**  
2014 saw an increase in participating businesses accepting the downtown gift card to over 70 businesses!

**Start accepting the Downtown Gift Card today!** Contact Ender Göçmen at [egocmen@rdowntownalliance.com](mailto:egocmen@rdowntownalliance.com) to get signed up. Registration is free, and there are no fees.