

# New businesses coming to Main Avenue

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ASHTABULA — Main Avenue will be seeing new life in a couple of months.

For a long time, Ashtabula's historic downtown street has been underdeveloped and neglected.

This will soon be changing thanks to a group of investors and devoted volunteers.

Walking down Main Avenue now, activity can be seen through the storefronts.

Urban planner and project consultant Jamie Baker spearheaded the project "Made on Main," to recruit small [makers] businesses for Main Street.

"Main Avenue offers great places for maker businesses to launch, collaborate and be supported as they grow," Baker said. "Makers Districts can be a viable strategy to revitalize post-COVID rust belt downtowns."

According to Time magazine, the “maker movement” is the umbrella term for independent inventors, designers and tinkerers. Maker culture can also be called Do-It-Yourself Culture.

According to the Made on Main website, “Three to five businesses will receive a cash prize — in turn — they will commit to opening their business on Main Avenue and learning the skills to succeed, with our support.”

The investors committed in total \$100,000.

On Aug. 4, 2023, different businesses came together to pitch their business plans to a panel of five volunteer judges.

The winning seven businesses that received funding include: Blessings Concrete, Technological Resources, Happy Etchings, Castle Metal Decor, Uneeqly Made, Eclectic Art Avenue and Craft Styles.

“I am more than excited to be on the street for many reasons, but especially because I was born and raised here,” said Uneeqly Made owner Shaniqua Bell.

Baker said that they are currently making improvements in some of the new spaces on the street.

“It should be wrapped up in late spring,” Baker said.

“We [the city] have been in full support of the Makers on Main and believe Main Ave. is the perfect place for this concept to start,” said City Manager Jim Timonere. “We are excited to see their successes going forward.”

“There’s a new energy on the street and a dedicated group of volunteers through the ADDA creating events to draw the community to downtown,” Baker said.

The Shea Theater and Carlisle-Allen building are two other projects under way on Maine Avenue.

With the addition of these new businesses, the future of downtown Ashtabula looks bright.