

# the Stamford DOWNTOWNER



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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT, SANDY GOLDSTEIN

*Quality of Place — A Magnet for Creative People*



Richard Florida, author of the *Rise of the Creative Class*, set the bar for dynamic cities when in 2002 he wrote that, “the economic need for creativity has registered itself in the rise of a new class, the Creative Class. The core of this class, some 40 million strong, are creative professionals in engineering, art, law, finance, health care etc. They engage in complex problem solving which requires high levels of education or human capital. They are paid to use their minds.” Creative people are the sustenance of cities and they locate where the essence of a place is not a frill but a necessity. In his newly updated book, *The Creative Class Revisited*, we can see why his premise is pertinent to Stamford Downtown today. First, it is important to note that

the “creative class” of people comes in all shapes, sizes, colors, ages and lifestyles and to get them to a community, it must offer something for all of them. Hence, Richard Florida coined the phrase, “quality of place,” which describes the following: an environment teeming with diverse people of all ethnicities, religions, ages and nationalities; a neighborhood with vibrant street life and engaging activities; and a place that is authentic with what Richard Florida calls, “real buildings, real people and real history.” Stamford Downtown embodies all the aforementioned characteristics.

Our Downtown has a spirit and street scene, which engages the creative class. There are 79 restaurants within a 16 square block radius, the majority of which have enticing outdoor cafes. Walk on Bedford, Summer, Atlantic or Main Streets and the ambiance of people-packed energy is overwhelming and contagious. There’s art and culture and music. Each summer, Stamford Downtown hosts an engaging outdoor sculpture exhibit attracting thousands of patrons and adding to the richness of the neighborhoods. High quality art galleries on Bedford, Franklin and Summer Streets exhibit cutting edge art. The offerings at the Stamford Center for the Arts have doubled this year and the Stamford Symphony yearly presents 12 concerts and is certainly just what the Creative Class ordered. And, of course there is the glorious summertime with 12 extraordinary outdoor concerts (Alive@Five and Jazz Up July) drawing a diverse demographic and 10,000+/- people a week. Then there is the nightlife scene, beckoning the young at heart with innumerable clubs, rocking the Downtown until wee hours of the morning.

Stamford Downtown is blessed with a diversity that is the envy of most communities and which the creative class wouldn’t be without. Our 5,400 downtown apartments are home to people who span generations, ethnicities, economic status and religions. Anyone can and does fit in. Hundreds of new apartments from market level to affordable to high-end have been approved and are in the process of being built. The creative people who will call Downtown home in the future will be able to meet and socialize with people unlike or similar to themselves. They will have a multiplicity of choices.

Most important, the “quality of place” which is so essential to the creative class must be authentic. It must have real history, historic architecture and nothing that reeks of a “chain-store” environment. Only a real, not *ersatz*, environment will beckon the creative class. Our Downtown is the real thing. Historic architecture is what placed Bedford Street on the National Historic Register. Old Town Hall, the site of a \$20,000,000 renovation which preserved both the 1904 *beaux arts* façade and the incredible interior, is now home to a state of the art Innovation Center which draws talented people to its doors. Main and Bank Streets boast beautiful, renovated mid-century structures, which are now home to offices and a vital restaurant scene. Juxtapose the latter architecture with the dramatically modern Trump Tower and you have the diversity that enhances cities.

Quality of place doesn’t just happen. Downtowns like Stamford’s are part of an ongoing vision, which embraces diversity, authenticity, vibrancy, residential living, and arts and culture. Those of us who share the latter vision will continue in our pursuit of providing the kind of quality-place destined to attract the Creative Class.

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## Mother/Daughter Clown Team Parades Through Stamford Downtown

Big feet. Red nose. Crazy hair. These are the outward hallmarks of a UBS Parade Spectacular Clown. But what does it take on the inside to don the silly costume and prat fall your way into the hearts of children up and down the Parade route each November?

Rebecca Shapiro and her mother Naomi Hersh will join the clown ranks once again this year and their excitement is palpable. It almost appears as if they're poised to compete with the kids they've set out to make smile for Stamford Downtown's Most Enthusiastic Parade-Goer, if such an award happened to exist. However, Rebecca & Naomi aren't clowns from way back in the day. They've put in hard work and significant energy to create their colorful alter egos. "My mother and I are a duo. Her last name in real life is Hersh, so naturally, her clown name became 'Hershey'. After much thought, [my clown name of] 'Cocoa' was born!"

In preparation for the UBS Parade Spectacular, which winds its way through Stamford Downtown on Sunday, November 18, all parade clowns undergo "serious" training. During two 3-hour classes, "Hershey" & "Cocoa" learn and practice basic improvisation skills as well as rehearse specific routines developed and taught by professional, working clowns. Whether it's creating a tunnel of flying rubber chickens for fellow clowns to run and dance through or learning how to engage the parade audience as a whole, while executing a schtick with a single young face in the crowd, Rebecca "Cocoa" Shapiro and Naomi "Hershey" Hersh will ultimately be left up to their own devices and rapport when they embark on the one mile journey from parade step-off at Summer & North Streets to the Grand Stand situated on Tresser Blvd and Atlantic Street. "I love whenever the kids hold up the spin signs intended for the balloons! I twirl and twirl and they are legitimately gleeful. I am also a big klutz... Inevitably, mid-twirl, my hat comes off or my nose falls off and I get to make a big scene retrieving it." Rebecca says, with a smile.



"Cocoa" and friends during clown training, November, 2011.



Rebecca "Cocoa" Shapiro (left) and her mother Naomi "Hershey" Hersh (right).

The mother/daughter comedy team, having already taken their act "on the road", has even considered going semi-pro. A few of their fellow parade clowns spend time throughout the year as "therapy clowns" in the Stamford Hospital clowning troupe, The Health and Humor Associates, less formally known as The HaHas. Visiting the rooms of hospitalized adolescents provides a welcomed distraction for both patients and their families or visitors but it's really no joking matter. HaHa clowns submit themselves to over 30 hours of training on topics as wide as "Introduction to Makeup", "Hospital Protocol" and "Knowing When to Leave the Room."

For now though, Rebecca & Naomi are focused on the task at hand: bringing joy to the crowds at the parade. As they prepare their clown characters for another year on the route, it's the various tools and tricks of the trade that occupy them. While Stamford Downtown supplies basic makeup kits and offers to arrange for professional quality clown costume rentals for all of its volunteers, many clowns choose to purchase their costumes and commit to the same character each year. In fact, for Naomi's birthday this past year, Naomi's office-workers bought her the most thoughtful gift they could think of: a colorful clown outfit that "Hershey" can call her very own!



"Cocoa" the clown at the UBS Parade Spectacular, November 20, 2011



## Russ Hollander, Master Goldsmith, Adds Luster to Downtown

“Original and always handmade” seems like a good idea to base a jewelry business on. Unfortunately, trends in the last few decades have dictated that mass-produced jewelry become the status quo. Luckily for Stamford residents, Russ Hollander, Master Goldsmith, still believes handmade jewelry is the best way to represent his remarkable craft.

For over 30 years, Russ Hollander has operated his gallery & studio workshop here in Stamford and remains the pre-eminent working goldsmith in the northeast. Utilizing only 18 karat gold alloys and platinum, he and his team fabricate both unique, one of a kind, handmade works of art and manufacture 1800 proprietary styles of diamond bands. In fact, the studio on Bedford Street has the capacity to produce 20,000 rings per year, to be sold in the gallery and at other fine jewelers throughout North America.

Russ recently moved his studio and gallery to 154 Bedford Street because he firmly believes “Stamford is the cultural center of Fairfield County and Bedford Street is the cultural center of Stamford.” That dedication to Stamford Downtown and its culture, coupled with his fondness for the SoHo neighborhood of lower Manhattan, are what drove him to design the inside of his shop

with a beautiful reclaimed brick wall brought here directly from SoHo. The custom-built art deco mahogany & ash wood display cases provide the perfect viewing experience for the artwork at this fabulous jewelry studio.

Already a nationally recognized name within the jewelry industry, Hollander’s move to Bedford Street has made Russ and his work more visible to his local audience. He has an undying passion for creating wearable works of art that will be a source of pride for generations, as well as redesigning, restoring and repairing jewelry in a one-on-one experience. Russ Hollander is just as passionate about his craft as he is about Stamford Downtown and walking into his gallery will show you just how dedicated he is to both.

## Hurricane Sandy Breezes Through District Streets

Perhaps she was merely showing respect to Stamford Downtown’s President Sandy Goldstein, but for some reason Hurricane Sandy was remarkably kind to Stamford Downtown when she came to visit last month. A sign down here, an awning or branch down there, but in general damage was minimal. On the upside, many downtown businesses experienced a windfall from Sandy. Since kids were off from school, many parents were off from work and thousands of people had no power at home, they flocked to the downtown for relief. Most restaurants did very well on the Saturday night prior to the storm and then were packed during lunch and dinner for days after the storm. Frank Marchetti of Columbus Park summed it up in a phrase, “We rocked the house all week.” Area hotel business was also strong. Joe Kelly, General Manager of the Stamford Marriott Hotel & Spa, spoke for them all when he reported, “The hotel was full by Monday night and looks like it will remain full through the weekend. We are housing 150 of the out of state repair crews as well as several hundred local residents. Our staff has been amazing, working 16-hour days and doing everything to make people comfortable. By the end of the night on Monday we had served over 450 meals. Guests have been both appreciative and amazed that we have operated through this storm.” Movie theaters also experienced busier than normal mid-week volume. Beginning Tuesday afternoon, both the Bow Tie Majestic and Landmark movie theaters were bustling with family business from matinee through evening show times. A little theatric diversion can go a long way in stressful times.

So Sandy came and Sandy went, and Stamford Downtown served all city residents admirably by providing some shelter and relief from the storm and its aftermath. There really is a rainbow following every storm.



Stamford Downtown—Tuesday, October 30, 2012

## Stamford Downtown 2012 Survey Results

To quote Chris Matthews, host of NBCUniversal’s, *The Chris Matthews Show*, “Tell me something I don’t already know.” That’s basically the challenge we gave to John Bourget, President of *Witan Intelligence Strategies, Inc.* a top-flight market research and marketing strategy consultant. We engaged John to help us better understand the growing numbers of people who come Downtown on weekdays and weekends, day and night, frequenting the broad spectrum of Stamford Downtown dining, shopping and entertainment venues. We wanted to learn where Downtown patrons come from and what they do here. Because throngs of people are on the streets and dining at outdoor cafes, we chose late June to conduct our survey. John brought Witan’s extensive expertise to the table to help us construct a professional intercept survey to answer our primary questions, as well as gather additional pertinent data. Witan staff intercepted visitors on the sidewalks, in restaurants and at the movie theatres. As a result, nearly 200, 13-question, self-administered questionnaires were collected and compiled. Raw data was then interpreted into a summary report with conclusions to help us better fine-tune our marketing efforts.

So what salient facts did we learn?

- 57% of downtown visitors live or work downtown. Not a surprise to anyone, but this is crucial data to help us better focus on separate marketing initiatives for those who live or work here and those who do neither.
- Restaurants are the major downtown attraction. Again, we expected this but were surprised that 86% dined while downtown. That’s far higher than we would have estimated and helps us to direct more effective cross-marketing efforts.
- Business parties spend an average of \$274 per restaurant visit, more than double non-business parties. This data will help to re-shape Stamford Downtown’s restaurant marketing strategies.

Far more data, recommendations and conclusions are contained in the complete report that is available to all Stamford Downtown businesses and property owners. Simply contact the Stamford Downtown office to request your digital or printed copy.

Where do we go from here? We’re already working with Witan Intelligence Strategies on the next steps. We plan to create an event specific version of the survey and apply it to the UBS Parade Spectacular. We’ll also work with Witan on a survey and methodology to delve into the specific demographics of downtown residents. Stay tuned for more detailed results from our next survey.



Average Number of Visits to Stamford Downtown per Year

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## Connect With Stamford Downtown!

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For details on events happening in Stamford Downtown throughout the year, check out our blog: <http://stamforddowntownevents.blogspot.com/>

You can also connect with us on  Facebook: [www.facebook.com/StamfordDowntown](http://www.facebook.com/StamfordDowntown)

AND follow us on  Twitter:  
@StamfordDowntown @AliveAtFiveCT  
&  
@BalloonParadeCT

## Don't miss these SPECTACULAR events in Stamford Downtown!

SAC Capital Advisors  
Helium Balloon Inflation Party  
Saturday, November 17, 2012, 3-6pm  
Summer & Hoyt Streets

UBS Parade Spectacular  
Presented by Stamford Town Center  
& The Advocate  
Sunday, November 18, 2012 at 12 noon  
Stamford Downtown

Heights & Lights  
Presented by Reckson,  
A Division of SL Green Realty Corp.  
Sunday, December 2, 2012, Sunset  
Landmark Square & Latham Park

Watch the Balloons Inflate! Saturday, Nov. 17, 3 – 6pm Summer & Hoyt Streets  
Sponsored by SAC Capital Advisors, LP

# UBS Parade Spectacular

Presented by Stamford Town Center and The Advocate

Sunday,  
November 18  
12 noon  
Stamford  
Downtown

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