

Historic Kennett Square
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
27 May 2020

The Success of the Historic Kennett Square Small Business Response Fund, Launching Today, Depends on Community Generosity

By Historic Kennett Square

As communities across the globe continue to struggle through the COVID-19 crisis and its devastating aftermath, individuals and organizations in Kennett are supporting those in need and thinking strategically about how Kennett can prove resilient at this critical moment for the future of the town.

Historic Kennett Square and Square Roots Collective announced today the launch of a major matching-fund campaign to give urgently needed help to local businesses. The Historic Kennett Square Small Business Response Fund (SBRF) will provide immediate relief to small, consumer-facing retail businesses in Kennett Square Borough and Kennett Township in the form of grants up to \$10,000.

Thanks to an incredibly generous offer from Square Roots Collective, every dollar donated to the SBRF up to \$250,000 will be matched and given directly to businesses.

“A community is an ecosystem,” says Square Roots Collective founder Mike Bontrager. “When one sector is weak, everyone suffers—but when all are healthy, everyone can thrive.” He notes two silver linings in the midst of this crisis that shed light on this holistic view of community. “First, where lots of local nonprofits often worked independently, in silos, in the past, they’re now coordinating and working together for the greater good. Second, people are seeing how important healthy businesses are to our local economy. They provide jobs, vibrancy, and a sense of place. We need thriving shops and restaurants in order to have a thriving Kennett ecosystem.”

“Part of Historic Kennett Square’s mission is to support our small businesses,” says Historic Kennett Square Economic Development Director Nate Echeverria. “We’ve been watching what other communities are doing in response to the crisis, and what’s unique here is the matching element, mobilizing community generosity and involvement.” All donations are tax deductible, Echeverria says, and he emphasizes that the funds are intended to fill the gaps for all qualifying businesses. Bilingual materials and outreach are designed to ensure that Latinx businesses receive the help they need as well. “It’s not just about State Street,” he says. “Another unique element of the Small Business Response Fund is that applications will be accepted in both English and Spanish. Technical assistance is available in both languages, and businesses are encouraged to reach out to the program team with questions and for guidance completing applications. Equity is a big part of this and we want to make sure no business falls through the cracks.”

Sustaining this healthy ecosystem is the ultimate crowdfunding challenge for a town that justifiably prides itself on its unique sense of place and community spirit. “The success of this program depends entirely on community support,” says Historic Kennett Square Executive Director Bo Wright.

The SBRF launches Wednesday, May 27, and individuals are encouraged to donate at KennettSBRF.com. Grant applications are also available at KennettSBRF.com for consumer-facing, retail small businesses in the Borough and Township and will be accepted on a rolling basis through June 12. Businesses will be notified about grant decisions on or around June 22.

“Kennett is a special place. People really do care about taking care of each other,” Bontrager says. “This fund is part of a constellation of initiatives that are encouraging people to take care of their neighbors in very tangible ways.”

“This is a challenge to our community to turn \$250,000 into \$500,000,” says Bob Norris, Historic Kennett Square Board member and chair of the HKS Economic Development Council, “Let’s do this.”

Find full information about the Small Business Response Fund at KennettSBRF.com

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Founded in 1986 as the Kennett Square Main Street Association, Historic Kennett Square is a volunteer driven, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, focused on Kennett Square’s economic well-being, historical integrity, programmatic development, vibrant culture, and urban hospitality.