

Historic Kennett Square Annual Report 2020



From the Executive Director

Dear Community Partners,

When I arrived in January 2020 to take on the responsibilities of Executive Director for Historic Kennett Square, our staff and Board began a process of refocusing and reimagining how the organization could best serve the needs of our growing community. In late February, just a few weeks before the COVID shutdowns began, we put together the following vision statement:

At HKS we know that Kennett Square has the potential to be an inclusive, beautiful, and evolving community. We provide expertise in community development and thought leadership, and we host events to build community so that Kennett Square will become a beautiful community where everyone can belong and prosper.

We also determined that we hoped to be defined by the following characteristics:

Collaborative. HKS works with others to help define and achieve the goals of the community.

Inclusive. HKS exists to serve the entire Kennett community, and therefore makes every effort to reach across and break down the dividing lines in our community to ensure that all voices and perspectives are heard and honored.

Empathetic. HKS seeks to understand the struggles of every community member or group.

Focused/Strategic. HKS will help frame the clearly defined goals for the community and stay focused on the achievement of those goals.

Quality. HKS will always act in an exemplary and professional manner. We will aim for the highest quality in events, placemaking, and economic development.

The vision statement and characteristics are aspirational—that is, they define the type of organization we hope to become. But we are proud of the work that we have done over the past year both to adapt and to take steps in the right direction towards becoming an organization that serves the entire Kennett community.

Throughout the year, HKS followed these guiding principles as we sought to implement creative and helpful solutions for local businesses and community members through these extraordinary times. As we look forward to continuing to serve the community in 2021 with some exciting new programs, we wanted to share this brief synopsis of some of the initiatives HKS led during this year like no other.

There are some impressive numbers to share—for instance, through a partnership with Square Roots Collective, HKS disbursed \$276,100 in grants to 61 different small businesses.

And HKS communications engage thousands in our wider community and further afield:

- Our Around the Square newsletter reaches 6,452 subscribers weekly
- Local media outlets published dozens of HKS press releases in 2020 on a range of topics from local events to merchant and nonprofit partner stories, placemaking, equity issues, economic development, COVID responses, and more
- The KSQ Farmers Market newsletter reaches 2,186 subscribers with vendor information and more
- 57,600 (new) users accessed the Historic Kennett Square website in 2020, with 113,000 unique page views
- The HKS Instagram account has 11,000 followers, with 37,500 likes in 2020, and the HKS Facebook page has 11,600 likes/followers.

But what's most important to us are the growing relationships, community partnerships, and amazing social capital that lie behind these numbers. These give us great hope for what lies ahead for Kennett Square.

In the pages that follow you'll find a brief update on some of the initiatives HKS was able to implement in 2020. Thank you for your interest and for all you do to support us in this work. It's the generous support of our donors, sponsors, and volunteers that enables us to progress towards realizing this vision of a beautiful community where everyone can belong and prosper.

Sincerely,

Bo Wright
Executive Director
Historic Kennett Square

Photo credits:
Dylan Francis,
Troubled Genius Media

2020

Economic Development

Support for Businesses during COVID

HKS provided information and support for business owners in Kennett Township and Kennett Square Borough who faced an overwhelming and complex array of loan and grant programs—from sharing up-to-date information as aid became available to advice on which aid sources were most appropriate for a given business to assistance filling out applications. We were also able to host a business planning course in Spanish in partnership with True Access Capital.

Although the next several months will be critical for recovery, and especially for our restaurant community, at this point no retail-facing small businesses in Kennett Square have closed due to COVID and, in fact, we welcomed nine new businesses in 2020: B&B Barber Lounge, Fab and Boujee Boutique, Take Care Apothecary, Rainbow Soap Company, Deisy's Cake Shop, Greek from Greece, Living My Best Cigar Life, Bamboozled, and Candle Studio 1422.

The Small Business Response Fund (SBRF)

HKS raised over \$135,000 in funds from local corporate donors and foundations as well as from community members. With a matching grant from Square Roots Collective, the SBRF distributed \$276,100 in grants to 61 small businesses in Kennett Square Borough and Kennett Township. These grants made a critical difference for these small, locally owned businesses and restaurants at the heart of Kennett's local economy.

[The SBRF Impact Report](#) details the program's success and its significant impact in the community.

Impact

Placemaking

West State Street Parklet

In July, HKS was awarded an AARP “quick-action” Community Challenge grant and used these funds to build Kennett's first parklet with the help of a multi-generational team of 15 volunteers from the community. The parklet, which provided safely distanced outdoor dining space for four different restaurants on State Street, was taken down before the first snowstorm in December. HKS hopes to be able to bring back this popular outdoor dining and meeting spot this spring.

Christmas in Kennett

With anchor sponsorship from Longwood Gardens in addition to support from local businesses and community members, HKS expanded last year's successful Light Up the Square tree lights and added décor, signage, and placemaking elements so that everyone who visited Kennett over the holidays experienced a safe, festive, and spirited place to shop and dine.

“Thank you for everything you have done for everyone in Kennett. I had never known this community existed before moving here and I truly believe Evergreen would have never survived these past two years if we had opened anywhere but Kennett Square. You are appreciated.”

—Valerie Machorro, co-owner and baker, Evergreen Café, and SBRF grant recipient



Communications

Around the Square Newsletter

HKS adapted its monthly newsletter to a weekly format in order to share community updates, stories of resilience and community spirit, and ways to support local. If you're not already receiving these emails, you can sign up [here](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page and select "General Around the Square").

Press

HKS continues to reach an even wider audience with its stories and press releases in local media outlets including The Daily Local, Southern Chester County Weeklies, Chester County Press, and Chadds Ford Live. With a continued and intentional focus on being as inclusive as possible, the HKS website features several of these stories translated into Spanish as well. For links to these stories see the [press page](#) and [Meet Our Merchants](#) landing page on our website.

Website

The HKS website is Google's top suggestion when people search "Kennett Square" in their browser. Throughout the shutdown, HKS has maintained pages with helpful local resources and up-to-date information, in both English and Spanish, accessed through buttons on the homepage. Additional buttons link to information for local businesses, and to information for consumers on local shopping, dining, and event updates.

Social Media

HKS has maximized the extensive reach of its social media presence throughout 2020 to share information relevant to all sectors of the community. The HKS Facebook and Instagram feeds provide continuous engagement on everything Kennett Square, from local news and COVID updates to information from local community partners and photos and videos promoting Kennett Square as a beautiful and safe place to shop and dine.

Business Support

In addition to checking in personally with local business owners where possible, HKS sends regular updates and relevant information to restaurateurs and retailers via email in addition to supporting and promoting initiatives such as street closures for dining, Small Business Saturday, Restaurant Week, sidewalk sales, and the Tinsel on the Town holiday shopping event.

Professional Photography and Videos

HKS continues to engage local professional photographers to take photographs of the town and various events, merchants, restaurants, shops, and more. These add tremendously to all of our communications and are also a valuable source of images for the businesses, Kennett Square Borough, and local nonprofits. In 2020, we also commissioned several shopping and dining videos as well as a Brewfest video. These were very well received by the community and help to promote Kennett Square as an attractive and safe place to shop and dine.



Pivot

Programs and Events

While signature HKS events like Third Thursdays on State Street and the Holiday Village Market could not take place in 2020 due to COVID restrictions, HKS was able to pivot and continue with several other important programs and events:

KSQ Farmers Market

The pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of growing and sourcing food in our local context, and HKS quickly pivoted the Farmers Market so that it could remain open safely. The winter season continued in a modified format in the Kennett Library parking lot until May, when the regular season opened in the parking area of The Creamery. Our goals were to keep everyone safe while continuing to support local farmers and producers and give the community access to fresh food direct from local farms.



KSQ Restaurant Week

The first week of March 2020, just prior to the COVID shutdown, Historic Kennett Square ran a successful KSQ Restaurant Week, with 17 participating restaurants. HKS promoted this second-annual event in various media outlets and on social media and maintained a central landing page with a “menu of menus” on our website.

Safety

Winterfest and Brewfest

A successful sold-out “leap day” Winterfest in February was quickly followed by news of COVID shutdowns, and over the next several months it became increasingly clear that a traditional Brewfest format would not be possible in the fall of 2020.

Under the leadership of Jeff Norman and the Brewfest Committee, HKS successfully pivoted to a contactless “Backyard Brewfest” case pickup. The event sold out in a matter of days and was widely praised for being a well-organized and safe pivot. This will be the format for the 2021 “Bonfires and Brews” Winterfest as well.

In addition to being key fundraising events for HKS, Brewfest and Winterfest support local and regional breweries. The alternative events also enable HKS to maintain placeholders for these events and continue to engage the thousands of loyal ticket buyers. We’re grateful to all of our volunteers (about 100 for Winterfest and about 65 for the Brewfest pivot event).



As part of our community communications during COVID, HKS commissioned a series of drawings by April Heather Art to help educate and remind people of necessary safety precautions.



Our Vision for 2021 and Beyond

At HKS, we believe that when communities are connected and inclusive and have strategic leadership, they grow and change in positive ways that benefit everyone. We believe that successful communities are built by many hands, but they require leadership and strategic direction—whether they are experiencing rapid growth pressure or trying to fill vacant buildings. Without leadership guiding a shared vision, the Kennett region will experience the kind of haphazard growth that destroys its unique character and strong social fabric. Worse, without strategic leadership, too many community members will be left out of economic progress.

At HKS we're committed to not letting that happen. We look forward to continuing to host community-building events like Third Thursday, Brewfest and Winterfest, and the Holiday Village Market when it's safe to do so once again. We're also looking forward to imagining new events that are welcoming and inviting to everyone in our diverse community and to hosting conversations about what we want our community to be as we create a shared vision that best serves the entire community.

We long to see Kennett Square become the most beautiful town in America, where people from different backgrounds, generations, and walks of life can afford to live and contribute to the community, where new architecture complements old, where creativity flourishes, and where everyone can belong and prosper.

Please stay tuned to the work of Historic Kennett Square by signing up to receive our [weekly newsletter](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).



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