



# Business Messenger

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Welcoming new businesses to the downtown area, including the Rolling Meadows Shopping Center (pictured), is among EDC members' top priorities.

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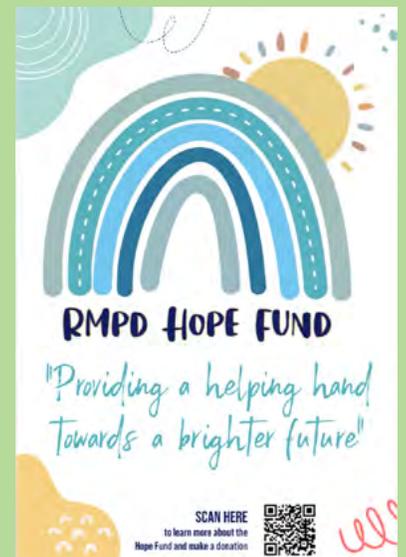
## Support RMPD's New 'Hope' Fund

Rolling Meadows Police Department's new Hope Fund is an easy, convenient way for local businesses to make a difference in the community.

Hope Fund donations support the Rolling Meadows Police Department's Social Services Outreach Specialists and their efforts to help those in need.

Funding will help residents in crisis – victims of domestic abuse, for example – as they start to rebuild their lives.

Visit <https://www.gofundme.com/f/rmpd-hope-fund> to "lend a hand towards a brighter future."



## Economic Development Committee Initiatives Guided by Local Business Owners, Community Representatives

Rolling Meadows' Economic Development Committee is a vital cog in the City's overall economic development engine. It's primary mission, as an advisory body to City Council, is to facilitate development of programs and services that promote the long-term well-being of Rolling Meadows' business community.

The committee's current members – five local business owners, two City Council members, and a former chamber of commerce executive director – understand the needs of local businesses and use those perspectives to identify opportunities for growth and success. Each member is appointed by the mayor, with City Council consent, for a three-year term.

"EDC members are a very active group and are always looking for ways to improve the City's business climate," explained Business Advocate Martha Corner, staff liaison to the committee.

"In particular, they are focusing on efforts to enhance the downtown corridor along Kirchoff Road, revitalize the shopping districts throughout the City, and support the greater business community as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic."

The EDC meets at 6:00 pm at City Hall on the first Monday of each month. Meetings are open to the public. View upcoming agendas and minutes from past meetings at <https://cityrm.org/354/Economic-Development-Committee>.

### Committee Members

- Linda Ballantine
- Christine Burbidge
- Craig Carlson
- Roberta Marcinkus
- Nick Martinelli
- Kevin O'Brien
- Mike Reppe
- Jenifer Vinezeano

# KNOCKOUT Prints Stands Apart in Competitive Graphic Arts Field by Delivering 'Hands-On' Customer Service

Since opening its doors in late 2020, KNOCKOUT Prints has delivered a customer-focused service experience that extends far beyond the industry standard.

## Literal 'Hands-On' Approach

KNOCKOUT's services include logo design, screen printing and embroidery services, vinyl sign applications, personalized promotional products, and more. Unlike many of its competitors, who offer a primarily web-based platform for placing and shipping orders, owner Shannon Thomas and her team prefer a more "hands-on" sales approach.

"I want customers to see what we have to offer with their own eyes, rather than relying on online photos and descriptions that aren't always accurate," she explained. "There's real value in allowing your clients to touch

and feel the fabrics before they place an order. It's just one way we try to stand out."

## Curb Appeal

Another way KNOCKOUT Prints differentiates itself from others is through what Thomas calls "our storefront appeal." Located at 4007 West Algonquin Road, the shop's large, colorful sign is highly visible to passing drivers and has proven quite successful at drawing them inside.

"I'd say 90% of our customers first learned about us by simply driving past the shop," she added.

Once inside, customers encounter a welcoming, inviting storefront space with an abundance of natural light, comfortable seating, a range of product samples, and a multi-media

design center where Thomas provides design and consulting services for clients who request them.

The shop is also dotted with examples of its work: commercial apparel with logos; sports team and other customized apparel; and a range of promotional products where businesses may apply their name, logo, or other identifiers.

"Our space is functional, professional, and versatile," Thomas said with pride.

"It's a reflection of our overall approach to customer satisfaction."



## 'Next Level' Operations

With an eye to the future – and an interest in her company's long-term growth and success – Thomas

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## Join the Online 'Buzz' at City-sponsored Website: <https://rmbusinessbuzz.org>

The City's RM Business Buzz website (<https://rmbusinessbuzz.org>) proudly lists over 760 local enterprises, making it easier than ever for local



Get the latest on all the businesses that make our City great!



customers to find their favorite shops, restaurants, and service providers. Best of all, these listings are available to all Rolling Meadows businesses at no cost.

The site's navigation features allow users to search for companies by name or review listings organized into specific categories, such as Shopping, Dining, Construction, Services, and Health/Well-Being.

## Special Offers & Expanded Features

Participating businesses are invited to offer coupons and other customer deals through the website. These are listed on the Buzz's "Special Offers" page.

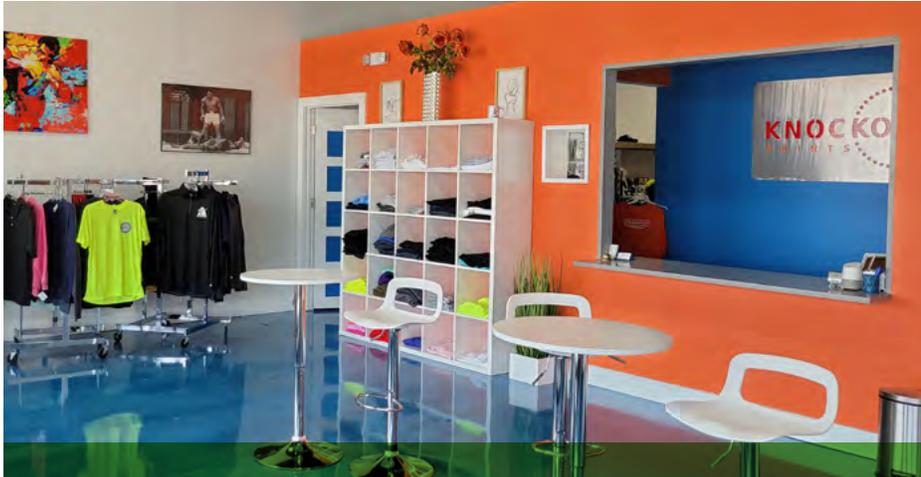
The City is also adding new features that will help expand user interest and

enhance its value for participating businesses, including:

- **Local company profiles** that highlight members of Rolling Meadows' business community.
- **Community events previews** offering a listing of upcoming events.
- **Job listings** at local companies.
- **Local business news/accolades** that help share company success stories.

## Join the Buzz!

It's easy for local businesses to be featured on the RM Business Buzz. Contact Business Advocate Martha Corner at [cornerm@cityrm.org](mailto:cornerm@cityrm.org) or 847-870-9004.



*KNOCKOUT Prints' showroom, which includes a multi-media design center, allows customers to browse product samples in-person.*

### **KNOCKOUT Prints...***continued from page 2*

recently completed a three-month business development program through Next Level Northwest (*see page 4*), a nonprofit business accelerator established in 2018 by Rolling Meadows and four other northwest suburban communities. The process, she explained, was eye-opening.

"As a business owner, it's far too easy to immerse yourself in every little detail. The Next Level Northwest program helped affirm that my role, as owner, is to view the big picture," she said. "Now, my approach is more organized and thoughtful, and my business is better off because of it."

#### **Fulfilling a Lifelong Passion**

KNOCKOUT Prints is the tangible result of Thomas' lifelong interest in graphic arts, combined with her



*KNOCKOUT Prints owner Shannon Thomas followed her passion when opening the shop in 2020.*

insistence on being able to live her "second half" on her own terms. After spending nearly 25 years in the finance and technology industries, Thomas lost her job in early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Facing an uncertain future, Thomas decided it was time to follow her passion.

"Losing my job finally convinced me to follow the path I had always wanted to travel. Plus, I told myself my next career was going to be something over which I had complete control."

#### **Counts Rolling Meadows as Client**

The shop's client base is comprised primarily of organizations with 50 or more employees, including construction companies, community groups, local businesses, and municipalities – including Rolling Meadows.

Services provided to the City include designing/printing T-shirts for Community Events Foundation volunteers and supplying promotional beverage cups for August's Wine-Down by the Creek event.

"It's a pleasure to offer our support for City initiatives, considering how great Rolling Meadows has been to us," Thomas recalled. "City staff members, especially, have been amazing in terms of helping us do what was needed to get the business up and running."

## Private Networking Event Headlines Another Successful 'Showcase'

Savvy local business professionals forged new connections at a private business-to-business (B2B) networking event that was the focal point of Rolling Meadows' September 23rd Business & Community Showcase at Meridian Banquets.

Among those in attendance was Christine Burbidge, Financial Advisor with Edward Jones, who appreciates the event's "low key" atmosphere and built-in opportunities to expand her professional network.



"I've participated in the previous two business expos. It's a terrific way to mingle with other business owners and City representatives," she explained.

Burbidge also complimented the City's choice of venue, crediting the Meridian's overall ambiance, service, and complimentary appetizers for further enhancing the Showcase's appeal.

"Rolling Meadows is proud to offer local business representatives a forum for engaging in meaningful dialog with their peers," Business Advocate Martha Corner explained. "Attendee feedback consistently demonstrates that the B2B networking event ranks as a highlight of each year's Showcase.

"We continue to explore options for providing additional value for attendees at future events," she added.



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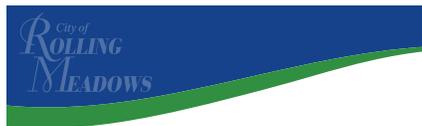
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## Business Incentives Aim to Attract New Restaurants & Retailers

Rolling Meadows' new business incentive program offers a variety of options to help draw new restaurants and retail shops to the downtown



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For more information,  
 contact Martha Corner, AICP  
 City of Rolling Meadows Business Advocate  
 847-870-9004 | [cornerm@cityrm.org](mailto:cornerm@cityrm.org)



An example of signs the City has posted in available restaurant/retail spaces.

corridor along Kirchoff Road and other shopping districts throughout the City.

Program elements include:

- **Grant funding** for facade and/or interior remodeling upgrades (\$10,000 maximum).
- **Annual tax rebates** of food and beverage/home rule sales tax payments for the first three years of operation.
- **Fee reimbursements** for permit, inspection, and other City fees (up to \$5,000).

"These economic development tools expand our options for attracting new businesses to the City," Business Advocate Martha Corner explained.

"We view it as an opportunity to strengthen our local business community, improve residents' shopping and dining experiences,



and further diversify Rolling Meadows' tax base."

The incentives are intended for non-corporate, independent business operators. National chains and franchise owners, in most cases, are not eligible.

Program details and applications are available online at <https://cityrm.org/858/Restaurant-Retail-Incentives>.

## Take Your Business to the 'Next Level'

Next Level Northwest is a regional business accelerator that helps small companies solve challenging business issues, increase productivity, and grow the local economy.

Learn more about how your business can benefit by contacting Martha Corner, Rolling Meadows Business Advocate (847-870-9004 or [cornerm@cityrm.org](mailto:cornerm@cityrm.org)).



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