

# Hope & Main Opens Downtown Makers Marketplace and Will Soon Expand to the West End

The state's premier culinary incubator is selling made-to-order and prepared foods and products from local makers while also developing shared-used kitchens in the West End.

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Joseph R. Paolino Jr., Barbara Papitto and Lisa Raiola. Courtesy of Hope & Main

**Hope & Main**, the state's premier culinary business incubator that first launched in Warren in 2014, just opened its Downtown Makers Marketplace at 100 Westminster St. in Providence. It's like a mini grocery store with food products available for sale from the incubator's more than 100 culinary

makers, plus ready-to-eat and made-to-order breakfast and lunch items, prepared foods, hot and cold beverages and more.

“The simplest way to describe it is that it’s a ‘grocerant’ [a hybrid grocery store and restaurant], a place to get global coffees and teas and craft beverages made by our collaborators from [Schastea](#),” says Hope & Main founder and president Lisa Raiola. “A place to get made-to-order breakfast and lunch prepared by our culinary team led by chef Benny Barber [the ‘incu-baconator’], and it’s also a place for grab-and-go food and gift-worthy pantry staples.”

“We have made it very simple for you to support small business,” Raiola adds. “Everything from the bread that we serve our sandwiches on – [Buns Bakery](#) by the way – to all of the products on the shelves – were all made by local culinary creators from Hope & Main.”



The counter at Hope and Main's Downtown Makers Marketplace.

The market was created in partnership with funding from the [Papitto Opportunity Connection](#) — a nonprofit private foundation dedicated to listening and working together with Rhode Island’s Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities — and came to fruition in this location thanks to former Providence mayor and current real estate investor Joseph R. Paolino Jr. of [Paolino Properties](#). “They made it possible to launch this new and innovative idea of the Hope & Main Downtown Makers Marketplace,” Raiola says.

Hope & Main has more than 200 active members and it has launched over 450 companies since it started in 2014. The Downtown Makers Marketplace is stocking products from more than 100 of them; 60 percent of the businesses are women-owned, and 40 percent are owned by minoritized business owners. The plan is to help even more “food-preneurs” to launch small businesses with an additional Hope & Main expansion to Providence.

“We just bought a building in the West End and we’re going to double the capacity of Hope & Main to produce food and help small makers to launch,” Raiola adds. “So just think, people can start their business in the West End, and a few months later, they could be right here selling it.”

Part of the goal is to eliminate barriers, especially for people of color, to start a food business and get their products on shelves.



Products on the shelves at Hope & Main's Makers Marketplace.

“In the life of an ordinary food business that doesn’t have the benefit of an incubator, it can take years to get on a shelf, it can be very expensive, there are many barriers, but with the help of POC and Paolino Properties, we just removed those barriers for these small businesses and for all of you, our local ‘foodieconomists,’” Raiola says. “With the marketplace, we are giving small companies a very big voice. And hopefully, customers will go into their local Stop and Shop, Whole Foods and Dave’s Marketplace, and say I want you to carry this product.”



Lisa Raiola speaks at the press conference and ribbon cutting.

Some food items and products are produced by immigrants from Ethiopia, Trinidad, Israel, Mexico, Cambodia and the Philippines. That is the reason that the [Papitto Opportunity Connection](#) got involved to help make it happen.

“For a new food business, the journey from inception to retail shelf is a high hurdle, and this is especially true for many of the ‘food-preneurs’ of color who come from our urban core of communities,” says Papitto Opportunity Connection founder and trustee Barbara Papitto. “When we learned that 40 percent of those businesses in the Hope & Main program are owned by people of color, we saw an opportunity. For far too long, startup small businesses owned by people of color have not had the support that they needed. The Papitto Opportunity Connection is here to change that narrative. The Makers Market at 100 Westminster is giving power to entrepreneurs of color, especially those of Central Falls, Pawtucket and Providence. It will provide critical exposure for food businesses at a time when they need it the most.”



Courtesy of Hope & Main

From the beginning, Joseph R. Paolino Jr. has been a key collaborator on the project, helping to convene the various partners and ensure that Hope & Main has all the necessary resources to turn it into a reality.

“The Downtown Makers Marketplace is a fresh idea that will engage workers and tourists alike in Rhode Island’s food start-up culture,” he says. “The opportunity to partner with Lisa Raiola, a true visionary in this space, and the Papitto Opportunity Connection on a concept that is ‘more than a marketplace,’ is a game-changer — not just for our building but for the economic development of the downtown financial district. Hope & Main Downtown Makers Marketplace accentuates our state’s greatest assets: our ability to collaborate and create great food, while also serving the needs of our community.”

Raiola is likewise looking forward to what each of the new developments has in store for the city.

“Since the day we opened our doors in Warren nine years ago, people have asked us two questions,” she says. “Why doesn’t Hope & Main have a market and why don’t you have kitchens in Providence? Now, with the good help of the Papitto Opportunity Connection and Paolino Properties, we can check both boxes.”

Hope & Main Makers Market is open weekdays for breakfast and lunch. Find out more about the Hope & Main Downtown Markers Marketplace at <https://bit.ly/DTMPLaunch>, including more about featured makers, menus, and marketplace offerings.