

MAIN STREET QUARTERLY REPORT

Q1 2025

A LETTER FROM JASON

Now that we are well into 2025, I want to share a message of optimism and opportunity for the small businesses that form the heartbeat of downtown Bellefontaine and small towns like ours across the country. According to a recent report from the National Federation of Independent Business, small business optimism is at its highest level in nearly three years, climbing above its 50-year average. This isn't just a statistic - it's a reflection of the resilience, perseverance, and renewed confidence that business owners are feeling after years of navigating uncertainty.

In Downtown Bellefontaine, I see this renewed optimism reflected in the conversations I have with local business owners every day. Entrepreneurs are planning expansions, new businesses are moving into renovated historic spaces, and existing retailers are finding innovative ways to attract customers. It's encouraging to see so many in our community not only surviving but thriving and embracing the possibilities of growth in the year ahead. Just as the NFIB report highlights a decrease in uncertainty, I can feel that same sense of confidence growing here. We know the challenges, particularly inflation, haven't gone away, but there's a belief that we can navigate them together.

Looking back at what we've built over the past several years, this surge in optimism is well-deserved. From new stores opening their doors to vibrant events drawing visitors from across the region, Bellefontaine has been a case study in small-town comeback stories.

Small businesses, both here and across Ohio, have proven their ability to create jobs, strengthen the local economy, and shape the culture of our communities.

As we move further into the year, I encourage everyone to support local businesses whenever possible. Whether it's a cup of coffee from your favorite café, a handcrafted gift from a local shop, or a family meal at one of our downtown restaurants, every small action contributes to something much larger. The foundation for a successful 2025 is already being built, and I have no doubt that this will be a year of growth, achievement, and new opportunities for small businesses in Bellefontaine and beyond.



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FEATURED ARTICLE:
Historic Church to Transform into Elegant Wedding and Event Venue The Maxwell

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HISTORIC CHURCH TO TRANSFORM INTO ELEGANT WEDDING AND EVENT VENUE THE MAXWELL



February 13, 2025 - The historic Grace A.M.E. Church, a cornerstone of downtown Bellefontaine's history since the late 1800s, is set to begin a new chapter. Small Nation and Brittany Saxton, owner of Six Hundred Downtown, have partnered to acquire and renovate the property at 233 S. Main St., transforming it into a beautiful new wedding and events venue, The Maxwell. The name pays homage to Rev. W.T. Maxwell, the pastor who led the church's construction in 1890.

The Grace A.M.E. Church, founded in 1865, has been a beacon of faith for over 150 years. The existing building was constructed in 1890 through the efforts of the congregation, including women who raised funds through washing services and community members who donated their labor. Over the years, it became not only a place of worship but a symbol of Bellefontaine's rich African-American heritage.

"The history of Grace A.M.E. Church represents the strength and unity of Bellefontaine's past," said Jason Duff, Founder and CEO of Small Nation.

"Our goal with The Maxwell is to honor that legacy while giving the building a new purpose that will serve our community for generations to come."

The Maxwell will preserve the church's architectural charm while introducing modern amenities for weddings, celebrations, and events. Planned renovations include a stylish front patio and a seasonal tent behind the building, ideal for hosting larger gatherings during warmer months.

Cally Lange of Revival Design Collective has been selected as the lead architect for the project. Revival Design Collective is known for its expertise in historic preservation and adaptive reuse projects, making them the perfect fit to bring new life to the space while maintaining its historic integrity.

"This is a rare opportunity to blend history with modern function in a meaningful way," said Cally Lange, Founder and Principal Architect of Revival Design Collective. "Our team is excited to create a design that respects the building's past while ensuring it serves the community well into the future."

"This project is about creating a space where history, community, and celebration intersect," said Saxton. "Downtown Bellefontaine has seen a growing demand for event spaces, and The Maxwell will not only meet that need but also provide catering opportunities to enhance every occasion."

Bellefontaine's resurgence as a destination for businesses, residents, and visitors has brought with it a heightened demand for unique event venues and quality catering services. The Maxwell, located in the heart of the city, will provide an elegant space for weddings, corporate events, and private celebrations, while offering catering partnerships that enrich the downtown experience.

Renovations are set to begin in early 2025, with the Maxwell slated to open for bookings in May 2025. This project represents the latest investment in Downtown Bellefontaine's continued revitalization and demonstrates the power of community-driven development.

Please follow the revitalization journey at www.themaxwellevents.com.



ANDURIL INDUSTRIES ANNOUNCEMENT



The recent announcement from Anduril Industries on their multibillion-dollar investment in Pickaway County, Ohio is a defining moment for our state's economy and national security efforts. Palmer Luckey, Founder of Anduril, recently did an interview with Bloomberg where he laid out why Ohio was the clear choice for this historic project. His reasoning reinforced what has been known for years - Ohio is one of the best places in the country to do business, especially when speed, workforce, and innovation are essential to success.

Anduril's new Arsenal-1 facility will create 4,000 direct jobs and thousands more in indirect roles, making it the largest single job creation event in Ohio's history. This is a game-changing investment, not only because of the sheer scale but because of the kind of jobs it will bring. High-tech manufacturing, aerospace, and defense technology are the future, and this project positions Ohio as a leader in those industries. JobsOhio, Governor Mike DeWine, and state and local leaders played a critical role in securing this investment by demonstrating that Ohio has the workforce, infrastructure, and pro-business environment necessary to make this project a reality.

Luckey made it clear that Ohio's ability to move fast was a deciding factor. The timeline to begin production by 2026 is aggressive, but as he said, "we don't have time for business as usual." That urgency is exactly why Anduril bypassed states like California, where high costs, slow bureaucracy, and unpredictable regulations make major projects difficult to execute. In contrast, Ohio leaders worked in lockstep with Anduril to ensure permitting, utilities, logistics, and workforce training would be in place to meet their tight deadline.

Beyond job creation, this investment is another step toward establishing Ohio as a national hub for advanced manufacturing and technology. With Intel already making a major semiconductor investment nearby, Anduril's presence will further attract world-class talent and new supply chain partners. Additionally, the project's proximity to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base strengthens Ohio's role in supporting national defense. The facility will manufacture next-generation defense technology, including autonomous fighter jets and advanced missile systems, reinforcing the state's role in keeping our country secure.

This announcement is proof that Ohio is winning. We are attracting world-changing businesses because we have the right mix of skilled labor, business-friendly policies, and a leadership team that understands what it takes to compete on a global scale. The ripple effect of Anduril's decision will be felt for decades, driving new economic growth, innovation, and national security advancements - all from right here in Ohio.

Small Nation is excited to be working to complete a new downtown development assessment with the City of Circleville in Pickaway County, and will be hosting the group for a Small Town Success Insight Visit in Downtown Bellefontaine in March. The community is also home to the famous Circleville Pumpkin Show, which the Small Nation team attended with Circleville Mayor Michelle Blanton last October. Follow Small Nation on Facebook for more updates.





Wild Brew Coffee in Clyde, Ohio



Wild Brew Coffee in Clyde, Ohio



Wild Brew Coffee in Clyde, Ohio

SMALL TOWN SUCCESS: ARCHITECTURAL RENDERINGS

One of the most effective ways to inspire investment and bring redevelopment projects to life is through high-quality architectural renderings. Small Nation's Small Town Success services include expertly crafted renderings that help communities showcase the full potential of their buildings and downtown districts. Whether you're looking to recruit new investors, secure financing, or help current property owners envision possibilities, these renderings provide a compelling visual representation of what's possible.

Working with our expert architecture and design partners, we transform outdated, underutilized, or vacant spaces into dynamic, investment-ready properties. These renderings not only create excitement but also serve as a critical tool for developers, city officials, and business owners looking to bring revitalization plans to reality. To learn more about how our architectural rendering services can support your community's growth, email info@smallnation.com.



Wild Brew Coffee in Clyde, Ohio

THE CARRIERS OF LIGHT



I've visited dozens of communities, maybe hundreds, crawling through old buildings, talking about glory days gone by, and dreaming and ideating of future possibilities. Each town has its own group of people who I can best describe as "the carries of the light." They are the storytellers, the historians, the local pastors, mayor, teachers, the

pharmacists, bankers, volunteers of local clubs and organizations. The workers who are slinging coffee, serving tables, fixing windows, sweeping sidewalks. It's the smiling residents who make you feel appreciated and welcome.

Recently, the Small Nation team visited Ripley, Ohio, for a Small Town Success Community Development Assessment.

Ripley, nestled along the scenic banks of the Ohio River in Brown County, is a community rich with history and brimming with potential. Our visit began with a community meeting where we listened to residents share what makes Ripley special and their vision for its future. The passion and pride for their town were clear, as was their excitement for the opportunities ahead.

Ripley's recent award of a multimillion-dollar Appalachian Community Grant from the State of Ohio has the potential to transform downtown infrastructure, creating a foundation for Ripley to thrive for generations to come. The town's historic charm, combined with its location on the river, offers unique opportunities to enhance tourism, grow new businesses, and strengthen the local economy. It's an honor to work alongside a community so deeply invested in its future, and we look forward to seeing Ripley's plans come to life.

This picture was taken during our visit of Doug McDonald and other local leaders in beautiful Ripley. Let's all find a way to be carriers of the light like the folks in Ripley and others will take note too.

BILLBOARD SPOTLIGHT: THE MR. SHOPPE



The Mr. Shoppe, a cornerstone of Coldwater, Ohio, is celebrating a remarkable 40 years in business with a special billboard campaign with COMSTOR Outdoor, Small Nation's outdoor advertising arm. This milestone marks four decades of dedication, quality service, and a commitment to the community. To honor the occasion, The Mr. Shoppe has launched a series of billboards featuring images of their dedicated staff who have played a

crucial role in the store's success. These advertisements serve as both a tribute to their hardworking team and a thank-you to the loyal customers who have supported them throughout the years.

Since opening its doors in 1984, The Mr. Shoppe has been the go-to destination for high-quality men's fashion, formal wear, and personalized service. Over the past 40 years, the business has built a strong reputation for providing stylish apparel and exceptional customer care.

"This celebration is not just about our business - it's about our customers and staff who have made these 40 years possible," said Mike Hibner, co-owner of The Mr. Shoppe. "We wanted our billboard campaign to highlight the people behind our success and show appreciation for the incredible community support we've received."

Working with the experts at COMSTOR Outdoor, the billboard campaign aims to reinforce The Mr. Shoppe's deep connection to the Coldwater community. By featuring familiar faces from their staff, the campaign resonates with locals who have built relationships with the store over the years. As The Mr. Shoppe reflects on its four decades of success, the team remains committed to continuing their tradition of excellent service and fashion expertise. With plans for new promotions, events, and offerings, the store is excited for the future and looks forward to serving the community for many more years to come.

If there is space for a second spotlight, we can do the following. We can make photos smaller somewhere if needed. If we can't do it, no worries.



UNION COUNTY FILM TAX CREDIT

Small Nation is excited to see the news that Union County, a film starring actors Will Poulter and Noah Centineo, has been awarded a major Ohio Motion Picture Tax Credit from the Ohio Film Office. This award is a big win for our community, bringing significant investment into Bellefontaine and surrounding areas in Logan and Union counties. While these tax credits often go to major cities like Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati, seeing one awarded to a locally filmed production reinforces the growing appeal and potential of small-town Ohio as a filmmaking destination.

At Small Nation, we were strong advocates for this tax credit because we know the kind of impact a project like this can have. From job creation to local business engagement, productions

of this scale bring new energy to our downtown and provide real economic benefits. Hotels, restaurants, coffee shops, and countless other small businesses will directly benefit from the influx of cast, crew, and production teams in the months ahead.

We are thrilled to welcome the actors and crew back to Bellefontaine and can't wait to see our town featured on the big screen. This investment helps solidify Ohio's growing reputation in the film industry and, more importantly, showcases what small towns like ours have to offer. Thank you to Governor DeWine, the Ohio Film Office, and all who supported Union County in securing this award. We look forward to watching this project come to life right here in our own backyard!

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This Christmas season, Downtown Bellefontaine truly shined as Ohio's Christmas Capital, bringing holiday magic to life with festive attractions like the Santa Shed, Mistletoe Avenue booth, and a bustling shopping scene. Visitors and locals alike enjoyed the twinkling lights, special events, and one-of-a-kind gifts from our local shops.

But the real magic wasn't just in the decorations or experiences- it was in the people. The families making holiday memories, friends gathering for holiday fun, and shoppers choosing to support small businesses made this season one to remember. Thank you for making Downtown Bellefontaine the place to celebrate Christmas!

Join us for Holiday Planning for 2025 by visiting www.christmascapitalohio.com.



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BUILD Cowork + Space Marysville is located in Uptown Marysville, just 30 minutes northwest of Columbus, and is within walking distance of some of Marysville's great Uptown features. BUILD Marysville offers dedicated desks, private offices, and a shared conference room space with all the benefits of the big city in a small town.

Offices are pre-furnished with items shown or can be white boxed. Reciprocal access to use communal space and bookable spaces at Bellefontaine locations and any future locations. Office rental comes with 10-hours of credits to book conference rooms and event spaces each month.

Memberships start at only \$99 per month. Find more info about coworking options at www.buildcowork.com.

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION**937.565.4580 | SMALLNATION.COM/AVAILABLE-PROPERTIES/**

THE JOURNEY OF HANNAH AND CARLY: FROM FARMERS MARKET TO THE MORNING RIOT



Hannah Wischmeyer and Carly Bogard, the sister duo behind The Morning Riot, have spent years perfecting their craft, pushing boundaries, and shaping the local food scene in Downtown Bellefontaine. What started as a simple farmers market stand has evolved into one of the most exciting breakfast and lunch spots in town—a place they describe as an alien disco brunch bar. But their journey to success didn't happen overnight.

Hannah and Carly grew up in a family with deep food industry roots. Their parents owned bagel shops in the Dayton area, supplying fresh bagels to universities and local restaurants. Though neither sister initially planned on following in their parents' footsteps, the love of food was always there. It wasn't until 2016, when Hannah took maternity leave from her job, that she started baking at home. Looking for a way to support the local farmers market, she decided to sell homemade bread—despite having no prior baking experience.

That first batch? Not great.

Hannah laughs now, recalling how the early loaves looked like rocks. But customers were supportive, appreciating her use of fresh, local ingredients. Over time, her skills improved, and the business took off while baking out of a mobile trailer kitchen. Carly joined the operation, bringing her efficiency mindset and passion for food. Together, they transitioned from basic quick breads to artisanal sourdough, pretzels, and bagels.



Their first major turning point came when Brewfontaine, a popular craft beer bar in Bellefontaine, sought out a local supplier for their pretzels. Competing against multiple bakers, Hannah and Carly's pretzels stood out—not only for their taste but for their mustache shape, which made them perfect for social media. The Brewfontaine deal gave them the confidence to expand their business and move into a commercial space inside the Main Street Marketplace in 2019.

From there, their wholesale business flourished. They supplied bagels, breads, and pretzels to multiple restaurants, working long hours out of the new space. But they had bigger dreams. Carly had a vision for a full-scale brunch restaurant, offering the kind of bold, unique flavors they loved to eat themselves. After years of perfecting their craft and building a loyal following, The Morning Riot was born.

Today, The Morning Riot is a reflection of Hannah and Carly's personalities—bold,

fun, and completely unique. Their menu features everything from avocado toast and pork banh mi bowls to handmade bagels and pretzels, all crafted with local ingredients from farms and producers they personally know. Customers have embraced their risk-taking, proving that small-town diners crave high-quality, creative food just as much as big-city patrons.

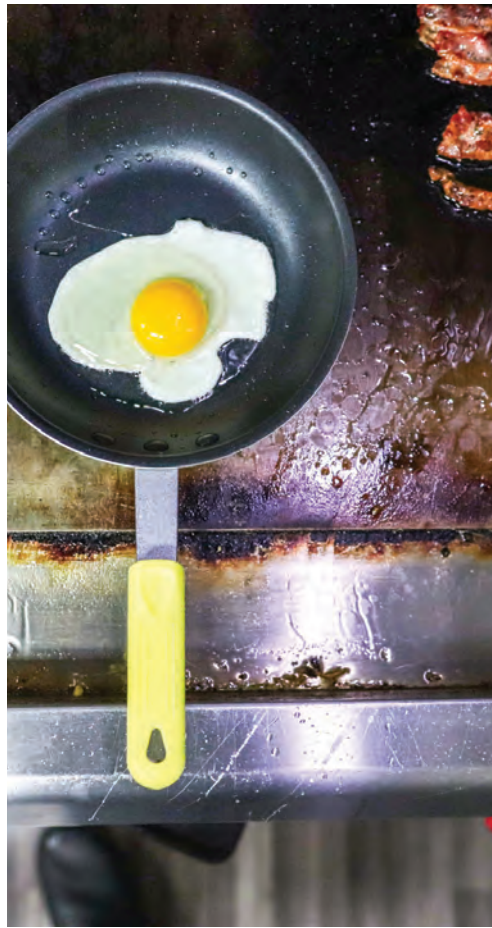
Beyond the food, they've also invested in technology, implementing self-ordering kiosks and planning for curbside pickup and heated order racks to improve efficiency. Their dedication to customer experience and constant innovation continues to drive their growth.

Through it all, they remain committed to their team, celebrating employees who go on to start their own businesses and fostering a culture of learning and support. Their story is one of hard work, resilience, and listening to customers, a lesson for any entrepreneur dreaming of turning their passion into a thriving business.

And as for what's next? More events, more menu innovation, and maybe even a second location. But no matter where they go, their mission remains the same: to serve incredible, locally sourced food in a space that feels like home.

The Morning Riot operates Tuesday through Saturday from 7 AM to 2 PM, with plans to add Sunday hours in the near future. Learn more about their story on episode 100 of the Small Nation Podcast at smallnationstrong.com/podcast or on their website at morningriot.com.





SMALL NATION

PODCAST

SEASON TWO

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Ep. 93: Jim Vickers, Editor of Ohio Magazine



Ep. 94: John Lowe, Former CEO of Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams

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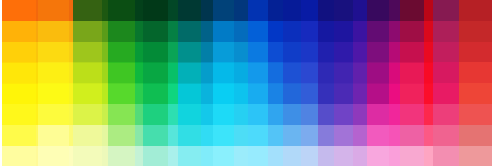
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