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More than a month after Hurricane Sandy, people are still coming by the White House Sub Shop in Atlantic City, New Jersey. After stepping over the lumber and ignoring the closed signs, many are still hoping for one of the shop's famous cheesesteaks.

But the White House, like many iconic businesses at the Shore, not to mention a few Wawas and CVSes, is still down for the count from Sandy.

"We got ripped," said owner Brian Conley. Waves of water flowing down Mississippi and Arctic Avenues flooded the cellar up to the ceiling and into the ground floor.

With all its operating equipment down there — heating, electric — this landmark "Home of Submarines" — is still two weeks from reopening. Another kind of submarine might have come in handy.

"We couldn't get here until the Thursday after the storm," Conley said, echoing a frustration many business owners faced after Sandy struck Oct. 29. "It was off-limits."

Just up the street, at the equally legendary Angelo's Fairmount Tavern, waves also lapped into the first floor, but Angelo's — through a little luck, some available day workers, and a wave through the barricades by a state trooper the day after the storm — managed to open the Saturday after the storm.

“I gave him my business card, and the state trooper said: ‘Listen, I love your place. Go

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Not that too many people were around to enjoy the linguine and crab, a problem that persists to some extent for businesses that have reopened. “We were open, but I probably could have stayed closed,” Mancuso said.

Businesses hurt by Sandy included favorite spots like Steve & Cookie’s and Tomatoe’s, both in Margate, and Yianni’s in Ocean City, all hoping to reopen in the next week; the Heritage Surf Shops and Kubell’s Too in Beach Haven — where the very thought of their going through tough times made some regulars cry (Steve & Cookie’s) and others vow to fly in from California for reopening (White House, mid-December).

T-shirts piled high

They also included the obscure and quirky — but no less beloved — like the so-called bong lady at the back of the Silver Sun Mall on Long Beach Island, where mounds of colorful but ruined T-shirts were piled up high on the sidewalk last week. On LBI, bait shops, real estate and doctors’ offices, ice cream and hair salons were swamped. Wawas in Margate and Ocean City are still closed.

Whole blocks of commercial stores saw inventory and property wiped out by flooding — Ventnor Avenue, near Washington in Margate, some parts of Asbury Avenue, pretty much the entire commercial strip of Long Beach Township and Beach Haven.

“I’m afraid some of the smaller operators may decide their loss was such that they cannot recover and they will not return,” said Deb Whitcraft, a former mayor of Beach Haven and owner of the Maritime Museum.

“The small businesses are the culture of the island,” added New Jersey Assemblywoman Dianne Gove, who lives on LBI. Others, like Long Beach Township

Police Chief Michael Bradley, worried about the long-term, and year-round, impact

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As of late last week, a dozen had been approved, worth \$1.25 million. The deadline for property-damage loans is Dec. 31; for economic injury, July 31. In Atlantic, Cape May, and Ocean Counties, the SBA issued 11,782 business-loan applications and received 195. Eight were approved, for a total of \$794,300.

Some business owners balked at the SBA's 4 percent interest rate. (Homeowner loans start at 1.68 percent.) "Many of us get lower rates from the bank," John Coyle, owner of Sink R Swim shops in Long Beach Township, told Marie Johns, the deputy administrator, who toured LBI last week to drum up attention for the loan program.

"Why as small businesses are we not getting the nice, low hanging fruit?" he said.

Some, like Daniel Fedeli, a restaurateur in Margate, are asking the state to set up 1 percent loans or give tax abatements while businesses still struggle to reopen.

Two bills were being introduced in the state Legislature to spur business recovery, said Tom Hester, spokesman for the Assembly Democrats. One would provide sales tax rebates on goods and services related to rebuilding.

The second, introduced by Assemblyman Patrick J. Diegnan Jr. (D., Middlesex), would create a monthlong, one-time sales tax collection exemption on meal purchases in state restaurants.

Booths saved

Cookie Till, whose Steve & Cookie's is in a 1936 building that includes original bar booths made of thick cypress brought up from Florida, was able to salvage the signature seating by sanding and resealing. The restaurant was gutted from waist down and redone, as food places on the island sent over meals for her workers.

At Heritage, owner Randy Young was operating out of one section while the rest of

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Many of these landmarks had proven their durability in the storms of 1944 and 1962.

But Sandy made those old high-water marks look like a kiddie pool. "If this ever happens again," Cookie Till said, even as her newly restored restaurant neared completion, "I'm throwing in the towel."

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