

2010 Annual Report
For the
Montclair Center BID



Prepared by:
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Executive Director

BID Office

Located at 7 North Willow Street, the Montclair Center BID's office continues to serve as the organization's main headquarters and primary location for committee meetings and general program operations. As the BID office continues to cultivate itself as the primary clearinghouse for virtually any and all information related to economic development and doing business in downtown Montclair, BID staff once again dedicated considerable time last year assisting district constituents and members of the public with a wide variety of questions and concerns. They regularly included:

- Connecting property owners with prospective retail and office tenants
- Assisting new and existing business owners with identifying potential loan sources, researching available grants and reviewing business plans
- Manage a database of all downtown businesses as well as ground and upper floor vacancy rates
- Working with business owners to help insure that their establishments are compliant with local code, including matters subject to Planning Board and Historic Preservation review
- Working with the Police, Code Enforcement, Public Works & Planning Departments to resolve issues relating to the downtown community

In August, longtime BID office manager Drina Holden stepped down to accept a new position working with low-cost housing in Newark. Staffed by Executive Director Tom Lonergan, the BID office is open Monday through Fridays from 9AM until 5PM.

BID Board of Directors

The BID Board of Directors is comprised of 21 members, including district property owners, business owners, town councilpersons, and representatives of various downtown groups. In 2010, we welcomed a few new faces to the BID Board while saying goodbye to some longtime members. Newly elected at the December BID Annual Meeting were Jeff Rosen from the Wellmont Theater, Debbie Santiago from Nest & Company, and Maureen Edelson from Montclair Physical Therapy. Saying farewell were Jeanette Lauture from Aunt Jean's Toys & Treats, Greg Spinelli from Church Street Caterers, and Jim Peskin from the Montclair Arts Council. All were active board members who contributed a great deal to our efforts throughout their terms, and we look forward to Jeanette's continued presence on the BID's Restaurants and Retailers Committee. Due to the township's de-funding of the MAC program, Jim Peskin will no longer be re-joining the BID in 2011. The BID wishes to thank all three of these volunteers for their time and friendship over the years. You will all be missed!

BID Ambassador Program

The BID's well established Downtown Ambassador Program continues to positively impact the quality of life of our Montclair Center commercial corridor. Comprised of 2 full time and 1 part time staff members, the BID Ambassador team is accountable for a wide variety of tasks and projects geared towards enhancing the cleanliness and overall visual appeal of our downtown business community. In 2010, the BID acquired new storage space in the lower portion of 363 Bloomfield Avenue which now houses the Green Machine and all BID banners, landscaping equipment, and holiday décor. The crew's daily maintenance tours of the entire BID district have made a significant impact on the local landscape and continue to help keep our downtown sidewalks and curblines clear of litter and debris.

In addition to general maintenance, the BID Ambassador staff is also responsible for:

- Removal of graffiti from downtown buildings and public locations as it occurs
- Powerwashing district sidewalks and storefronts upon request
- Watering and maintenance of sidewalk planters and plant beds
- Installation and maintenance of BID lamppost banners
- Installation and removal of seasonal decor
- Assistance with annual sidewalk sale and execution of all BID sponsored events
- Escorting business owners to their vehicles and providing them with general assistance
- Delivering information and maintaining communication with local business owners, relaying concerns and suggestions to the BID office

The Ambassador Team has become an integral part of the BID's program agenda, and they continue to exhibit their willingness to consistently go above and beyond the call of duty. We thank and recognize Dylan, Jon & Clint for their many years of hard work and demonstrated service to the BID organization and our entire downtown business community.

Landscaping

The BID's efforts to enhance the aesthetics of the Montclair Center commercial corridor continued in full force in 2010. Retaining the services of local landscaper Kathy Parsons, the BID once again installed 3 seasonal plantings in the 50 sidewalk planters lining Bloomfield Avenue. Working together with the Montclair Garden Club, the BID also planted and maintained flowers in the brick plant beds located along Church Street and at the 6 Corners intersection. These seasonal displays have been widely complimented and have had a magnificent impact on the downtown landscape 2010 also saw the installation of over 25 new street trees along

Bloomfield Avenue and several other downtown corridors.. Additionally, BID staff mulched nearly 350 tree pits during the springtime and maintained them all season long.

South Park Street

After many years of delays and uncertainty, the BID's long proposed plans for redesigning South Park Street finally gained some much needed positive traction in 2010. During the summer, the township awarded the project's design contract to Smith Maran Architects. In November, the firm presented two design concepts at a public information session held at The Siena. The final design will be unveiled at a second public information session to be held in early January, with project construction expected to commence by June 2011. To assist with the remaining funding required to complete the initiative, the BID obtained a \$500,000, 15 year, 0% interest loan through the state's Downtown Business Improvement Zone (DBIZ) loan pool. The BID wishes to thank Township Manager Marc Dashield. Mayor Fried and members of the Montclair Township Council for their much needed and much appreciated support for this critical infrastructure improvement project

Banners

BID staff continued to maintain more than 100 colorful promotional banners on lampposts throughout the downtown district. Designed with a fresh new look and style, the banners correspond with the BID's new promotional campaign highlighting the themes of "Eat" "Dine" and "Enjoy" and feature the tagline "Where the Suburb Meets the City". The banners were designed by Donna Lehner of Lehner & Whyte Design and photography was provided by Phil Cantor. In addition to the customary marketing banners, the BID also continued working with local not-for-profits to design and install banners to promote cultural events in the downtown district. In 2010, the BID installed three series of promotional banners for exhibits at the Montclair Art Museum.

Holiday Décor

In support of the critical holiday shopping season, BID staff installed festive seasonal décor throughout the downtown district in late November. Oversized wreaths and snowflakes once again festooned the lampposts of Montclair Center, enhanced this year with garland wrapped poles and brand new holiday themed banners. Additionally, the 50 sidewalk planters as well as the plant beds at the 6 Corners intersection were arranged with white sticks and red bows.

Our only regret continues to be the lack of electrical outlets atop the majority of downtown lampposts necessary for lighting most of these decorations. While delighted that all new poles recently installed along eastern Bloomfield were manufactured with these outlets, the remainder of the district's poles do not have them. As new and replacement lamp poles are installed, the BID will work with the township to ensure that they are properly fitted to accommodate future illuminated decorations.**Special Events**

In 2010, the BID again executed several retail-oriented special events aimed at marketing and promoting the Montclair Center commercial corridor. These events included:

- **Montclair Center 8th Annual Spring Sidewalk Sale**

With blue skies and warm temperatures, the 2010 BID Spring Sidewalk Sale successfully attracted thousands of bargain hunters to the downtown district for a day of discount shopping and family fun. On June 12th, Montclair Center's sidewalks were lined with scores of display tables offering wide varieties of marked down merchandise from dozens of our downtown's fine shops and eateries. In addition to great sales, live music and plentiful activities for the kids helped to make for a great day. Many thanks to Jeanette Lauture and members of the BID's Restaurants & Retailers Committee for their time and hard work helping us prepare for this very important annual event.

- **Crane Park Festival**

Morning sunshine coupled with some crisp late-September air helped to make this annual celebration of the BID's "east-end" business community one of our best yet. Featuring sales, specials and demonstrations from over 30 local restaurants and retailers, the Crane Park Festival is designed to market and highlight the eclectic blend of businesses occupying Montclair Center's burgeoning shopping areas east of the 6 Corners. Paired with live music, games and other activities for the entire family, this year's festival successfully attracted nearly 1,000 people to the park for the event. Our thanks again to Jeanette Lauture and members of the BID's R&R Committee for all they did to help make it so successful.

- **Independent Retail Week**

Normally reserved for large urban centers such as NYC and Chicago, the company and people behind Independent Retail Week decided to make Montclair their first small market test locale. Held between October 2nd and 9th, IRW included over 80 indie retailers from throughout town, each sponsoring its own sales, specials, and/or events to entice shoppers. The sponsorships and publicity generated by the pros at Nolcha, Inc. helped make the event a success for many participating businesses. Additional promotional investments made by the BID put downtown merchants at the front and center of this timely retail initiative. Our sincerest thanks go out to Kerry Bannigan of Nolcha for bringing this opportunity to Montclair, and a special recognition of Kelly DelRosso for her countless hours spent on the IRW initiative.

- **Black Friday Sale**

On November 26th, the BID sponsored its very first Black Friday Sale to help attract shoppers to our downtown on the year's most infamous shopping day. Over 90

Montclair Center shops and restaurants offered significant savings to customers for the day, which turned out to be a great success for most businesses that participated.

Marketing/Advertising

More than ever, publicizing and promoting the Montclair Center commercial corridor unquestionably remains as one of the most critically important functions of the BID. In addition to ads supporting BID sponsored events, the organization continues to commit valuable time and treasure towards marketing the entire downtown district as a competitive alternative to neighboring downtowns and suburban shopping centers. Working directly with many of Montclair Center's finest retail minds, the BID developed and implemented an assortment of targeted advertising initiatives aimed at promoting our downtown collectively. In 2010, several professionally designed ads were placed in some widely read publications including Suburban Essex Magazine, The Montclair Times, 201 Magazine, NJ Country Living Magazine, and Montclair Magazine, as well as on local websites Baristanet and Montclair Patch.

In addition to generic advertising, the BID invested in a variety of other marketing initiatives including:

- **BID Website**

In 2010, the BID continued to promote and routinely update its new website at www.montclaircenter.com, featuring a fresh design complete with valuable information about downtown shopping, dining, entertainment and much more. Visitors guides and other downloads are available on the site as well. Since its re-launch, the site has experienced an 80% increase in visitor traffic and now lands on the first page of most web searches related to shopping and/or dining in Montclair Center.

- **Shop Local Montclair**

Created by longtime downtown business owner Kelly DelRosso, the ShopLocalMontclair campaign was initiated in 2008 as a cooperative advertising collaboration which now includes more than 80 Montclair shops and restaurants. The grassroots SLM consortium undertakes a wide variety of marketing and advertising initiatives aimed at promoting local shopping while keeping ad costs to a minimum for participating businesses. In 2010, the BID proudly supported several of SLM's promotional endeavors and looks forward to working with this resolute group of proprietors in the year to come. Well done, Kelly.

Main Street NJ

Due to substantial budget cuts in Trenton, the Main Street NJ Program was largely de-funded in 2010, causing severe cutbacks to programs and services typically afforded to designatd MSNJ

communities. These services include assistance with architectural design, website design, and general business marketing. However, , Main Street NJ did continue to offer district members a wide range of professional and technical support services as well as free “webinars” designed to assist small business owners with a variety of issues. BID staff also regularly attended economic development and other training seminars offered thru the MSNJ at their offices in Trenton. We have received assurances that some of the monies have been restored and that many of the MSNJ programs currently on hiatus should resume in early 2011.

Transit Village Designation

In June, Montclair Center was officially designated as the state’s 21st Transit Village Community. The Transit Village Program is sponsored by the NJ Department of Transportation and recognizes communities which employ practices and govern by principles which encourage, among other things, pedestrian amenities and denser zoning within a ½ mile radius of a transit hub. In Montclair Center, the designation surrounds the Bay Street Train Station and encompasses the area surrounding it west to approximately North Willow Street. By this designation, the area is qualified to receive direct funds through NJDOT that benefit pedestrian access, slow traffic, and encourage transportation methods other than motor vehicles. The BID and the township submitted their first grant request in the Fall of 2010 and still await a response from the state.

Vacancy Committee

In response to Montclair Center’s rising retail vacancy rate earlier in the year, the BID created its Vacancy Committee to help breathe new life into its vacant storefronts. One of the committee’s first initiatives was to design and produce a series of oversized promotional banners to help market the inventory of available ground floor spaces. Complete with attractive graphics and relevant contact information, these window banners create a cohesive look for vacancy signage and have gone a long way towards attracting much needed interest in some of these storefronts. Since their arrival, the downtown vacancy rate plummeted this year from over 12% to 8.5% by December.

Additionally, working together with the Montclair Arts Council, the BID’s Vacancy Committee has successfully placed the works local artists into some of the downtown’s more prominent vacant windows. While temporary by design, these pop-up art displays have generated a lot of interest, livened up long dormant storefronts, and provided much deserved attention to the works of area artists. Many thanks to Vacancy Committee chairman Jerry Sweeney and well as to Jim Peskin and Phoebe Pollinger from the MAC for their tireless efforts with this initiative.