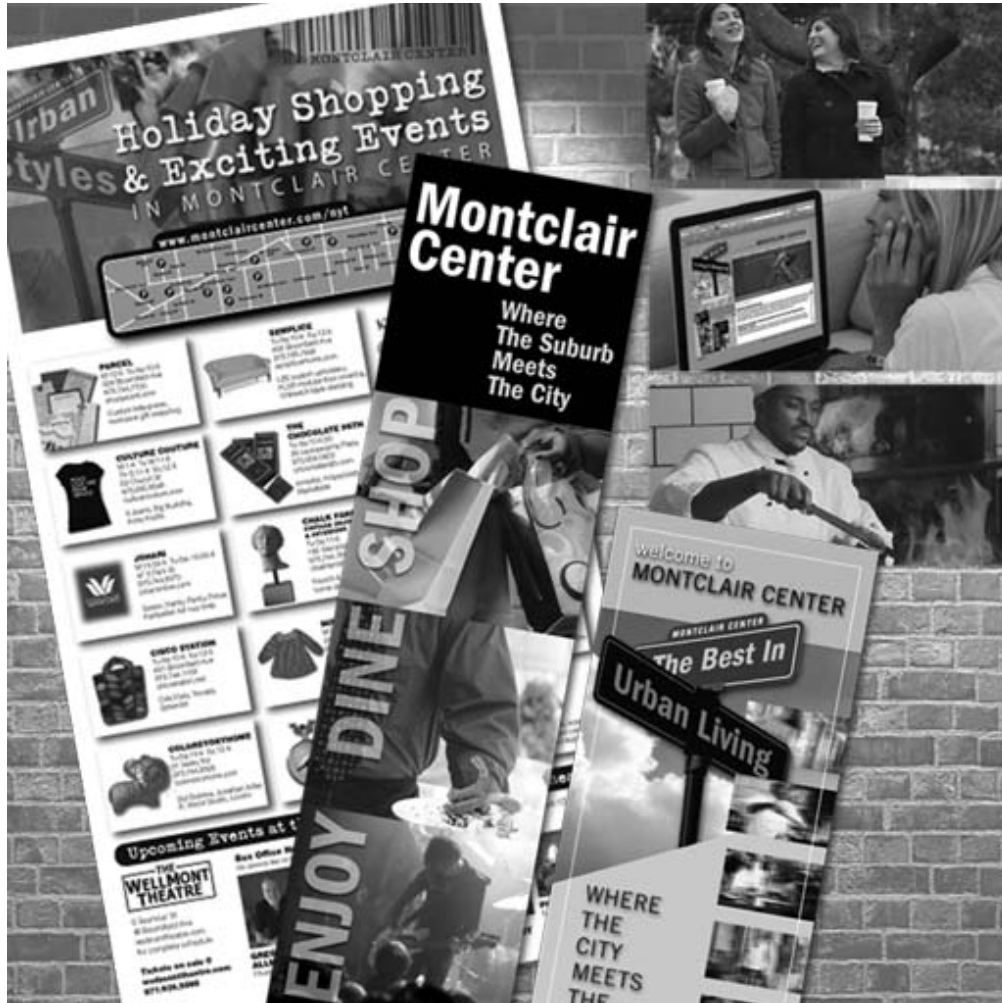


Montclair Center



**Business
Improvement
District**

**2009
Annual Report**

From The Director

“Cheers to a New Year and another chance for us to get it right.”

— Oprah Winfrey

This pithy maxim coined by the Queen of Daytime Television seems to offer both the perfect salutation to the arrival of a brand new year while saying farewell to one that many people would sooner forget.

2009 was undoubtedly one of the most difficult and challenging years ever to face the Montclair Center commercial corridor. While the harbingers of a troubled economy had already begun to announce themselves by late 2008, the full impact of a bruising recession was acutely realized this past year throughout our downtown business community. The distressing and ongoing decline in foot traffic and retail sales lamentably but predictably forced many businesses to shutter their doors for good, boosting our ground floor commercial vacancy rate to its highest levels in years. By summertime more than three dozen empty storefronts lined our local streets, presenting us with constant and forbidding reminders of the wicked toll this downturn has taken within our downtown district.

Thankfully, 2009's seemingly relentless deluge of dour reports and ominous predictions was offset by some notable silver linings for our Montclair Center community as well. The burgeoning popularity of the Wellmont Theater as a live performance venue successfully attracted thousands of concert goers to dozens of quality shows throughout the year. Promising financial and political support for the reconstruction of South Park Street from our Municipal Council brought us closer than ever to initiating this long overdue and critically important streetscape enhancement project. And Anthropologie's grand opening in the Hinck Building not only afforded us one of the most respected and inimitable destination retailers in business today, but also reminded us that, even in times such as these, Montclair Center continues to uphold its reputation as one of the region's most dynamic, diverse and desired downtown shopping locations.

Moving forward in what looks to be an equally tumultuous 2010, the BID must continue to embolden its efforts to help market and strengthen the economy of our central business district. In addition to working with property owners on filling vacant storefronts and attracting new businesses to Montclair Center, the BID pledges itself to doing all it can to help keep the doors of our existing business base open. While we are encouraged by the escalating interest of national chains seeking a new downtown location, we cannot overlook or underestimate the palpable struggles of an existing base of independent retailers barely able to stay afloat. The BID remains committed to working with the local business community throughout the year on devising strategies and implementing promotions aimed at sustaining and attracting new customers to our Montclair Center commercial corridor. For while our clean streets and pretty planters have all contributed to the inviting sense of place necessary for any eminent retailing corridor, Montclair Center's standing and success has always stemmed from its special collection and diverse array of independent businesses. They are our community's fabric and foundation, but without our collective support, they are at real risk of becoming extinct.

While our challenges are formidable and will likely continue to test our community's famed resolve for some time to come, we promise to do all we can to help our Montclair Center business community survive and succeed in a much brighter 2010 and beyond. On behalf of the BID Board of Directors and staff, we thank you for your continued support and look forward to working with you in the months to come.

Respectfully yours,



Thomas Lonergan
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
- 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

Staffed by Executive Director Tom Lonergan and BID Office Manager Drina Holden, the BID office is open Monday through Fridays from 9AM until 5PM.

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 2009, the BID acquired a new "Green Machine" street cleaner to replace the aging original machine purchased nearly 6 years ago. 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
- Annual assembly and disassembly of Montclair Center Stage
- 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 2009. 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. Additionally, BID staff mulched nearly 350 tree pits during the springtime and maintained them all season long.

South Park Street

After years of delays and uncertainty, the BID's long proposed reconstruction plan for South Park Street finally gained some much needed positive traction in 2009. Taking the lead with this project's resurrection was local architect and BID President Erik Maran, who with his staff at Smith Maran Architects drafted a range of potential designs for a more retail and pedestrian friendly South Park. After reviewing these concepts with the BID, and recognizing the encouraging potential of this project for the downtown business community at large, the Montclair Township Council confirmed their support with the appropriation more than \$400,000 towards the South Park effort. While more funding will be necessary in order to complete a project of this size and scope, members of the Township Council have expressed their commitment to seeing this project through to completion. In 2010, we anticipate working with the township to appoint a lead project designer and working with the local business community to select an agreeable design. The BID wishes to thank Township Manager Joe Hartnett and the members of our Township Council for their support and shared vision for this significant streetscape initiative. We likewise recognize and thank Erik Maran and everyone at Smith Maran for the countless hours dedicated, and largely donated, to bringing this project back to the forefront.

Banners

Over the summer, BID staff installed 110 colorful new 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 and Hugh Whyte from Lehner & Whyte Design and photography was provided by Phil Cantor. In addition to the customary marketing banners, the BID also began working with local not-for-profits to design and install banners to promote cultural events in the downtown district. Over the summer, we created two series of banners for the Montclair Art Museum's much anticipated Cezanne exhibition as well as for the October John Lennon exhibit at 460 Bloomfield Avenue. Such banners are installed by BID staff but paid for entirely by each sponsoring organization.

Holiday Décor

In support of the always vital 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 decorations.



Special Events

In 2009, the BID again executed several retail-oriented special events aimed at marketing and promoting the Montclair Center commercial corridor. These events included:

Montclair Center 7th Annual Spring Sidewalk Sale

Though dampened by afternoon rain, the 2009 BID Spring Sidewalk Sale effectively attracted scores of bargain hunters to the downtown district for a day of discount shopping and family fun. On June 13th, 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 at Montclair Center Stage 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 event.

Montclair Center Stage

The 4th season of summer concerts at Montclair Center Stage kicked off on Sunday, June 14th with a spectacular performance by Newark jazz sensation Carrie Jackson. The afternoon sunshine and massive crowds ushered in what became one of the series' most successful and well attended concert seasons to date. Over the next 12 Sundays, more than 2,000 people descended upon Montclair Center to enjoy a diverse array of free performances by some of the area's best musical talent. The shows at Center Stage continue to draw concertgoers from beyond Montclair's borders and help redefine our downtown as an appealing Sunday shopping alternative during the warm weather months. Many thanks to our friends at TD Bank for their sponsorship and financial support behind the 2009 MCS summer concerts, without which this year's performances could never have been possible.

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, Drina Holden and members of the BID's R&R Committee for all they did to help make it so successful.

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 upcoming 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 2009, several professional designed ads were placed in some widely read publications including Suburban Essex Magazine, NJ Country Living Magazine, Montclair Magazine as well as on the Baristanet website.

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

BID Website

In February, the BID unveiled its brand new website at www.montclaircenter.com, featuring a new 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.



Late Night Thursdays

Beginning in October, more than 50 downtown retailers agreed to keep their doors open until 8PM or later each and every Thursday night through the end of 2009. Intended to draw after work shoppers during the holiday shopping season, the initiative was met with mixed success by participating businesses, but was widely appreciated and applauded as one worth the time and promotion.

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 65 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 2009, 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

In November, the BID received notification from Trenton that Montclair Center's Main Street NJ program had finally graduated from "partner" to "traditional" status, providing our retail community with a great variety of valuable professional services at no cost. These services include assistance with architectural design, website design, and general business marketing. Additionally, Main Street NJ offers 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. Contact Drina at the BID office for additional information about these and other MSNJ programs available to Montclair Center BID members.

Signage

Last year, the BID began working with the Montclair Planning Department as well as members of the Historic Preservation Commission to update the township's commercial signage rules. Current ordinances regulating signs in the C-1 zone are outdated, restrictive and often discourage creativity by retailers when designing their signage. The BID and its partners in this endeavor look forward to presenting their recommendations to the township in 2010.

Join A Committee!

The BID always encourages and depends upon volunteers from within our Montclair Center community get involved with one or more of our organization's many committees.

Visual Improvements Committee

- Streetscape Enhancements
- Landscaping Programs
- Zoning & Redevelopment

Restaurants & Retailers Committee

- Event Planning
- Marketing & Advertising
- Business Surveys
- Ground Floor Retail Issues

Eastern Bloomfield Committee

- 4th Ward Business and Residential Issues

Quality of Life Committee

- Code Enforcement
- Public Safety
- BID Ambassador Staff



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Luther Flurry
Vice President

Phil Cantor
Treasurer

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28-28 S. Fullerton Ave.

Guy Kinley
26 Lackawanna Plaza

Sharda Ramharack
10 Elm Street

Sue Schultz
50 Church Street

Gerald Sweeney
460 Bloomfield Avenue

Business Owners

Phil Cantor
Phil Cantor Photography

Lian Ferguson
Mango's Reggae Cafe

Lisa Johnson
Culture Couture

Mike Lami
The Printers Place

Jeanette Lauture
Aunt Jean's Toys & Treats

Erik Maran
Smith Maran Architects

Greg Spinelli
Church Street Catering

Organization Representatives

Suzanne Miller
District Resident

Jim Peskin
Montclair Arts Council

Ronnie Powell, Esq.
Montclair Parking Authority

Aran Roche
Non-Profit/Montclair Art Museum

Christie Rule
Montclair Historic Preservation

Councilor Renee Baskerville
Township of Montclair, 4th Ward

Councilor Nick Lewis
Township of Montclair, 3rd Ward

MontclairCenter.com

**Business
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District**

7 North Willow street, Suite 4A
973.509.3820 p 973.509.3822 f
www.montclaircenter.com

