

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

Montclair Center BID - Board Meeting
September 19, 2023, 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
In Person at BID Office 26 Lackawanna Plaza or via Zoom

Board members in attendance: Emer Featherstone, Daniel Garcia- Pedrosa, Ernst Goldman, Rachael Grochowski, Matt Horrigan, Jill Montague, Jacob Nieman, Jaji Packard, Lori Price Abrams, Liz Rich, Kristen Zachares

Absent: David Cummings, Natalie Haddad, Ray Ketchem, David Placek, Matt Silverman, Robert Squires

Staff: Jason Gleason, Abhishake Shah, Aysa Gordon

Guest:

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

President Jaji Packard called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM.

II. ADOPTION OF JUNE MINUTES

President Jaji Packard moved to approve the June minutes with changes as presented, with Board Member Emer Featherstone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT (*Jason Gleason*)

A. Summer Review:

According to data from Placer AI, Montclair Center has seen an increase of 9.4% in visitors year over year. The district saw 2.4 million visitors with an average visitor-visit frequency of 3.4 times to our district since Memorial Day.

During the summer, we saw an average of 76,000 visitors per weekend with a dwell time of approximately 134 minutes.

Of those who visited Montclair Center, 2 million or 80% of visitors were non-Montclair residents, with only 479,000 or 20% of the visitors originating from the 07042 and 07043 zip codes. The 479,000 visitors from Montclair are striking because it refutes the idea that people from Montclair don't come downtown.

Board Member Jacob Nieman asked about getting statistics on the visit frequency for Montclair residents to get more insight into resident visits to Montclair.

The 2023 Jazz Festival: The 2023 Jazz Festival Jamboree was attended by approximately 17,200, lower than expected, but thunderstorms forced the festival to pause for 2.5 - 3 hours. Despite the rain delays, the Jazz Jamboree had a higher attendance than last year, with a 5% increase year over year. The festival had approximately 3,600 visitors from the 07042/07043 zip codes, which represents 21% of the total participants; 79% of visitors were non-Montclair residents. The festival also saw a 3% increase in attendees from over 30 miles away and a 1.5% increase from 50 – 100 miles away from last year. We are associating the increase with statewide PBS advertisements, which likely yielded a reasonable uptick in attendees from South Jersey and Philadelphia attendees.

2023 Pride. The Pride event experienced remarkable participation, boasting 26,800 attendees, representing a significant 65% surge compared to the 16,200 attendees in 2022. Notably, 7,100 individuals, constituting 26.5% of the total attendance, were residents of Montclair, showcasing solid local support. A majority of visitors, 73%, traveled from locations beyond Montclair.

Geographically, there was a notable 4% increase in attendees from distances exceeding 10 miles, a 2% increase from over 30 miles, and a 1.5% increase from beyond 50 miles. This data reflects the Pride Festival's widening reach and growing regional influence.

It is worth acknowledging the instrumental role of the Destination Marketing Organization's (DMO) investment in statewide advertising, which was pivotal in driving the increased attendance witnessed in Pride 2023.

Grants Update: The Board received an update on ongoing collaborative initiatives, highlighting a joint effort between our Parking Authority and Sustainability Office. A grant proposal has been submitted to the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to install electric car charging ports along the Greenwood Ave. extension. Anticipated news regarding the grant approval is expected shortly.

Additionally, there is progress in the application for the Citizen's Bank Champions in Action grant, intended to equip our ambassadors with electric-powered tools. Given the Town Council's ban on gas-powered leaf blowers in Montclair, this grant aims to supply ambassadors with electric leaf blowers, hedgers, and related equipment. The objective is to exemplify the success of such bans and serve as a model for other communities.

The Board is pleased to announce the successful acquisition of the Main Street Grant. The Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) grant remains strong, the final report for year one was submitted, and we have successfully been awarded our proposal for year two and are awaiting the state's payment.

Marketing: Instagram: Our Instagram presence has grown substantially during the summer, with our follower count reaching an impressive 13,900. Over the past 90 days, our activity on Instagram has been robust, involving sharing 81 media items to our feed, including 27 reels and 12,047 stories. Notably, there has been a 73% surge in the past 60 days alone, contributing to an overall increase of 31.3% in the past 90 days.

The recent spike in our reach can be attributed to exciting developments in the area, including new businesses and visits from notable personalities such as Pete Davidson. The mention of Pete Davidson resulted in 272 shares, 842 likes, and an impressive 20,000 views. Similarly, news about establishments like Milk and Cookies and Chip City collectively garnered over 1,000 shares. The expansion of Little Treasure generated significant buzz, with 81 shares and 257 likes.

Furthermore, comedian Alana Glazer, who recently performed at the Wellmont and explored local businesses, received substantial engagement with 736 likes and 252 shares for her Montclair post. Our Instagram metrics reflect the positive impact of local events and celebrity engagements on our online presence.

Marketing: Facebook: Our Facebook follower count currently stands at 12,667, reflecting a strong and engaged community. Our most popular post within the last 90 days highlights the updated Jerkface Mural titled "Gangs All Here." The mural's transformation, featuring an expansion from 26 to 58 characters and now covering the entire side of the building, showcasing every character Jerkface has created, has garnered significant attention and engagement.

Furthermore, our top-performing Facebook posts align with our audience's interest in new businesses. Notable highlights include the opening of NuYou Define Studio, Halden Interior Design, the ribbon-cutting ceremony at Gioia Mia, and an update on Montclair Film's new seats.

Marketing: Experience Montclair: On August 14th, we successfully launched Experience Montclair on Instagram and Facebook, unveiling our fresh branding. Jackie personally visited initial members, creating tailored content for them. Bobbi Brown was impressed with our video for 18 Label Studios, requesting and reposting it.

Our media and reels showcase diverse experiences across districts, accumulating 20,000 impressions and gaining 677 followers in just one month. Top-performing posts include "Stroll Through the Six Districts" and "Montclair's Most Instagrammable Places."

Our followers hail from key cities: 1) Montclair, 2) Philadelphia, 3) Edison, and 4) New York City. Upcoming advertising collaborations include Hoboken Girl, (Canadian) Crossings Magazine, Jewish News, and MPI Multiview, a company specializing in meetings and events rental, focusing on athletes.

Local Rat Population: We have scheduled a meeting for September 27th; the Health Department, Sanitation Department, Code Enforcement, and Public Works/DCS will convene. The agenda includes developing a streamlined plan for code updates, effective extermination, improved trash removal, and citations for illegal dumping in both the BID and Township. This concise and organized approach reflects the commitment of various stakeholders to address these issues comprehensively.

B. New and Noteworthy in Montclair Center

The district lost four businesses but gained nine new establishments: Newcomers include Forever Welded Jewelry, Fusionista, Gioia Mia, ASIL Catering, Mikki and Al's Noshery (moved), Art with All, Bella Nails & Spa, and The Falafel Guys.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT (*Matt Horrigan*)

A. Financial Review

Financials have been reviewed, and are awaiting final numbers from the account. Once received, Treasurer Horrigan will send the final numbers to the board.

B. Budget Committee update

The finance committee scheduled and met twice over the summer to formulate the 2024 budget. There will be one more meeting on September 28th to finalize the budget for fiscal year 2024.

VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (*Jaji Packard*)

A. Board member changes and recruiting

Board Secretary Elizabeth Rich regrettably stepped down as Secretary due to scheduling conflicts but will remain an active board member. Regrettably, Board Member Celestina Ando resigned, stating to focus on her work, which has seen positive growth and requires her attention. Both send their best wishes and thanks.

B. Meet and Greet Date:

The Montclair Center Meet and Greet is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, November 2, with the location pending.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Board President Jaji Packard motioned to move into Executive Session, which Vice President Ernst Goldman seconded.

- A. Executive Director annual review discussion
- B. Executive Director annual salary discussion
- C. Discussion of the five goals

President Packard moved to table five goals and revisited them later, and Ernst seconded the motion.

VIII. COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

A. Clean, Safe, Green & Parking (*Jacob Nieman*)

Rodent Control. Regarding the rat situation, outreach about caring for garbage should be in concert with outreach about rats, as they are interrelated.

Parking. Things we can do as the BID regarding parking: advertising the presence of parking garages and implementing tools to reserve parking spots. The committee also investigated winning and implementing one Clean, Safe, and Green or parking-related grant. Some suggested ideas included expanding meter hours, increasing fees during the extended hours, and improving the off-street parking experience, which would encourage using the parking decks. Looking at how the decks operate through ticketing or gating would also be beneficial.

Shuttles. Another thing discussed was a grant for an intra-Montclair shuttle program.

B. Stakeholder Support and Economic Development (*Ernst Goldman*)

- 1. Rodent Control
- 2. Idea vault or repository for all the ideas or concepts of what the BID can do. This includes actively soliciting stakeholders for ideas.
- 3. Newsletter for stakeholders.

C. Marketing & PR (see Marketing above)

D. Public Space Enhancement & Activation (*Jason Gleason*)

i. Garden Club meeting to discuss Church Street

The Garden Club aims to enhance plantings on Church Street and is interested in contributing to rodent control as they are concerned about the infestation in the planters. Having researched ideas from other towns, the club is eager to share suggestions. Board Member Jill Montague and President Jaji Packard seek to discuss Executive Director Gleason on options to emphasize safety and beautification.

ii. Traffic Circle Discussion:

Councilor Abrams inquired about the Church Street traffic circle. Director Gleason noted this and will bring this to the new town manager's attention along with cost-effective solutions.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

A. Destination Marketing Organization Update

Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) Director Judy has departed from the organization; Jackie Apicella, the Montclair Center's Director of Marketing and Events, has assumed the role of DMO Director, supported strongly by Assistant Director Abhishake Shah and Executive Director Jason Gleason. Significant progress has been achieved in the last two months, with positive feedback on the final grant report and the approval of our marketing plan for the next year from the grant administrator overseeing the grant at the NJ Department of State. A membership drive is planned immediately following the website launch to engage our community further.

Civic Brands is actively engaged in launching our website in the upcoming weeks, and Red Root has played a crucial role in refining our marketing strategy for the following year. The DMO has been rebranded from Destination Montclair to Experience Montclair. The Experience Montclair Instagram page, launched in mid-August, focuses on creating a curated feed that invokes a sense of exclusivity and quality. The Instagram page is gaining momentum and has already amassed 677 followers.

Collaboration with the Montclair Film Festival is set to be our initial trial for the Urality platform and launch of the DMO's new brand, Experience Montclair. The Board of Directors DMO committee will meet soon to discuss the second year of the DMO grant.

B. Support for Lackawanna Redevelopment Plan (*Jaji Packard*)

The Lackawanna Redevelopment Plan is up for a vote on October 10th. Board members are encouraged to contact their councilors to express their support for the redevelopment plan.

X. NEW BUSINESS

A. Edits to bylaws in December (allowing voting online; anything else?) (*Jaji Packard*)

Voting Online. At the upcoming annual meeting, proposed changes to the bylaws will be subject to a vote. Our bylaws require us to send out an annual report and mailing, including potential bylaws changes, before the meeting. The bylaws specify that the board must be physically present to vote on changes or motions.

President Packard strongly advocates for allowing online voting for immediate and emergency issues, as two such meetings occurred in the last two years.

Councilor Abrams suggests exploring options like Zoom or conference calls for better communication.

Board member Zachares raised concerns about bandwidth and limited Zoom access.

Board member Featherstone mentions her organization's practice of allowing votes via email.

To enhance clarity, the organization's lawyer will be consulted to determine the best course of action.

Expanding the BID: There have been discussions and a desire from neighboring commercial districts to join the BID. Director Gleason will meet with the tax assessor to fully understand the financial aspects while the board and the BID team further discuss the pros and cons of expansion.

XI. OPEN DISCUSSION – New Ideas, Comments, Questions (TIME PERMITTING)

Vice President Goldman mentioned that the owner of Santokh Yoga mentioned that Pineapple Express is not cooperating with the noise ordinance on weekends.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:40

*The next full board meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, October 18, 2023, at 7 p.m.***