

MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

STRATEGIC PLAN



June 2021

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Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

Montclair Center is the vibrant hub of Montclair Township, a community in northern New Jersey best known for its urban amenities, historic downtown, thriving dining and arts scene, proximity to New York City, and a diverse population. Montclair Center has become a regional destination flush with restaurants, shops, and nightlife.

Since 2002, Montclair Center has been guided by the non-profit Montclair Center Corporation and funded largely by a business improvement district (BID) that levies assessments on properties located approximately one to two blocks on either side of a half-mile stretch of Bloomfield Avenue. The two organizations are known collectively as the Montclair Center BID. Its services include an Ambassador program that provides enhanced cleaning and maintenance, plus district-wide marketing, events, and advocacy to support property and business owners located in the district.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In the fall of 2020, Montclair Center BID began the process of creating a new Strategic Plan to help guide the evolution of the BID over the next five years and beyond. The process was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic with the intention that recommendations could also aid in economic recovery. To guide the strategic planning process, Montclair Center BID contracted with Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.), a real estate economics and planning firm specializing in the formation, renewal, and strategic plan development for BIDs across the country.

The strategic planning process included an extensive community engagement effort, an understanding of market and real estate dynamics in Montclair, a review of prior plans, and the application of best practices from BIDs throughout the nation. The process was overseen by a working group comprised of the Montclair Center BID's executive committee along with several strategy sessions with the board of directors stretching from November 2020 through May 2021.

COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS & PRIORITIES

During the outreach process, input was gathered from over 1,000 community members and stakeholders about the most pressing needs and opportunities in Montclair Center. Survey respondents cited the following words to describe their vision for the future of Montclair Center: *diverse, vibrant, safe, parking and fun.*

CONCLUSIONS

Based upon stakeholder input, the analysis of market conditions, and inspiration from “best practices” in other cities, Montclair Center’s Strategic Plan is influenced by six key conclusions:

- Post COVID, growth is likely to attract new residents, businesses and investment, and also intensify pressure on displacement.
- The BID should adopt a hybrid management model that includes initiatives more commonly found in urban districts that are market-based, revenue diversified, and property owner-focused.
- A stronger working partnership with the Township will benefit Montclair Center and the community-at-large.
- The BID can strengthen its role in helping guide a prosperous business district by offering new economic development services.
- The BID should distribute benefits throughout the entire district.
- The BID should employ new operational practices and systems.

REVISED VISION & MISSION

The organizational vision offers the “big picture” view of downtown – what we are trying to achieve for Montclair Center. The mission relates more to the “how” – the role of the organization to achieve the vision. Building from existing statements, below are suggested revised vision and mission statements to carry Montclair Center forward from 2021 and beyond.

VISION

Montclair Center is a vibrant, thriving, and welcoming mixed-used commercial district where all residents and visitors can enjoy a variety of retail, restaurants, services, office, residential, and cultural options.

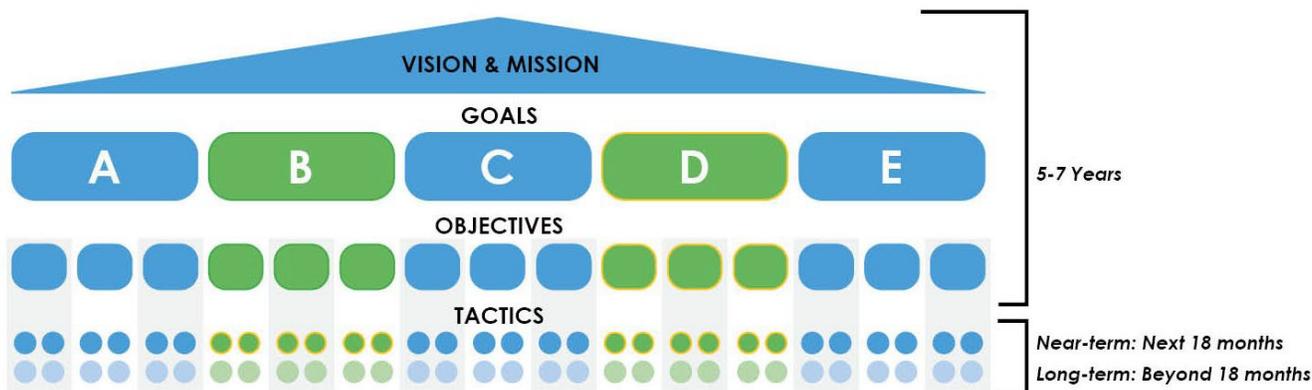
MISSION

The mission of the Montclair Center BID is to create a visually appealing, prosperous and inclusive downtown through continuous cleaning and beautification, programming, marketing, economic development, and advocacy.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES & TACTICS

The goals and objectives respond to the priorities stated by stakeholders and acknowledge shifts in Montclair Center market dynamics. Tactics relate to tangible programs, services and actions that the Montclair Center BID can take to implement each goal and set of objectives.

The chart below depicts how goals, objectives and tactics are organized in this plan. Each set of goals and objectives establishes a five- to seven-year time horizon for implementation. Tactics are then sorted into near-term and long-term priorities. Near-term tactics suggest initiatives that the Montclair Center BID can pursue over the next 18 months. The near-term also takes into consideration the dynamic of economic recovery from COVID-19. Long-term tactics are recommended for 18 months and beyond, with the expectation that the organization will conduct its next extensive strategic plan within five to seven years.



GOAL A: Maintain a downtown that is clean, safe and green.

Key Objectives

- Continue to provide a high standard of maintenance to ensure that the Montclair BID is clean and safe on a consistent basis.
- Utilize a Baseline Services Agreement with the Montclair Township to clarify Township responsibilities versus BID enhanced services.
- Document all clean, safe, and green work that is being performed by tracking daily demands, service levels, and establish benchmarks. Develop a series of metrics by which to measure success moving forward.
- Perform clean, safe, and green tasks with efficiency and plan for program expansion based on anticipated growth and increasing demands.
- Use more energy-efficient, electric and battery powered tools, equipment, and vehicles, where possible.
- To the extent possible, work to achieve an environmentally resilient district by employing eco-friendly best practices in landscaping and maintenance.

GOAL B: Employ marketing and communications approaches that promote the district and engage all stakeholders.

Key Objectives

- Increase awareness of the BID’s services and value among all Montclair Center stakeholder constituencies, with an emphasis on property owners, businesses, and residents located throughout the BID district.
- Broaden and deepen marketing efforts to tell the story of Montclair Center.
- Create more meaningful engagement opportunities for direct stakeholders (property owners, businesses) and others (visitors, residents) throughout the BID district.
- Strike a balance between social media and traditional communication tactics with downtown stakeholders, particularly business owners.
- Reevaluate events production and consider a variety of smaller events that provide tangible benefits to businesses located throughout the BID district.

GOAL C: Broaden support for businesses and property owners.

Key Objectives

- Continue to support small business recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Position the BID as a “go-to” resource for downtown market information and as a “welcome center” for new businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors.

- Encourage a diverse storefront economy by addressing Montclair Center’s vacant storefronts, retail mix, and business recruitment, and work to ensure an appropriate balance between neighborhood-serving and “destination” retail, restaurants, and services.
- Re-focus business support efforts to assist existing and legacy businesses, new small enterprises, and encourage ownership by people of color.
- Attract primary employers and new office uses to Montclair Center.

GOAL D: Enhance and create public spaces to provide enjoyable experiences throughout downtown.

Key Objectives

- Create a downtown that is welcoming and accessible for all people and modes of transportation.
- Make it easier for pedestrians and bicyclists of all abilities to get downtown.
- Continue to work with and support the efforts of the Township to implement the primary recommendations of the “Montclair SAFE Plan” and the Unified Land Use + Circulation Plan described earlier. Bloomfield Avenue construction may disrupt business. Tactics to help ensure businesses can thrive during and after construction are provided.
- Reflect the creativity of the Montclair community through public art, lighting, and other place enhancements that build upon community assets and are intriguing to diverse audiences.
- Elevate arts-related programming, placemaking, and events.

GOAL E: Work with the Township and other partners to be an effective advocate for the district.

Key Objectives

- Strengthen the BID’s role and organizational brand as the day-to-day champion for Montclair Center.
- Establish a collaborative culture with the Township to solve long-term planning, infrastructure and policy issues that affect Montclair Center.
- Foster partnerships with a variety of civic organizations to leverage BID resources and help solve a variety of downtown challenges.

ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

To meet the goals and objectives of the strategic plan, a realignment of existing and new staff is recommended. The refreshed Montclair Center BID organizational structure is organized around four major inter-connected “business centers,” or primary functions within the organization. These business centers are defined as:

- Clean, Safe & Green
- Marketing & Communications
- Business Support & Economic Development
- Public Space Enhancement & Activation

The strategic plan provides guidance to better define roles and responsibilities between the staff and board of directors, encouraging a more policy-oriented focus for the board and trusting the staff with day-to-day program implementation. Operational recommendations include the realignment of board committees, new internal accountability systems and strategies for revenue diversification. Metrics to measure the successful implementation of each goal area are also offered.

(1). Introduction & Process

ABOUT THE MONTCLAIR CENTER BID



The Montclair Center Corporation is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization established in 2002 by the local business community to enhance and promote downtown Montclair as a regional shopping, dining, and entertainment destination. Montclair Center is a nationally accredited Main Street Community that partners with businesses, nonprofits, landlords, and government to make Montclair Center a vibrant place to eat, work, shop, live, and play.

The Montclair Center Business Improvement District (BID) was founded by merchants and property owners who were concerned about on-street aesthetics, safety, code enforcement, customer attraction, and district marketing. The BID levies an assessment on property that funds activities and improvements within a defined boundary that roughly corresponds with Montclair’s downtown district. The Montclair Center Corporation serves as the management entity for the BID, and both organizations are known collectively as the Montclair Center BID. Since the Montclair Center BID was formed in 2002, the area has become known for its vibrant street life, fabulous restaurants, award winning retail, art scene, and pedestrian-friendly office setting.

BID revenue is used to fund the Ambassador program, which provides maintenance services that supplement those offered by the Montclair Township, as well as to develop and fund district-wide placemaking, marketing, and economic development initiatives that support businesses located in the district.

The study area for this planning process is the BID, generally bounded by Mountain Avenue to the northwest, Maple Avenue to the southeast and approximately one to two blocks on either side of Bloomfield Avenue.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In the fall of 2020, Montclair Center began the process of creating a new strategic plan for the organization. The plan is intended to guide the evolution of the BID over the next five years and beyond. The process was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic with the intention that recommendations could also aid in economic recovery.

The strategic plan includes input from over 1,000 community members and stakeholders about the most pressing needs and opportunities in the district. This report provides Montclair Center with a clear vision and mission, measurable goals and objectives, and a refreshed organizational structure capable of delivering on the expectations set forth in this plan.

To guide the strategic planning process, Montclair Center BID contracted with Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.), a real estate economics and planning firm specializing in the formation, renewal, and strategic planning for BIDs across the country. P.U.M.A. assisted Montclair Center in facilitating stakeholder engagement, developing strategic goals and objectives, creating an action plan for implementation, and recommending a revised organizational structure.

Step 1: External Environment Assessment

The goal of the external environment assessment was to understand the myriad economic and political forces that are currently shaping downtown Montclair. This step also aimed to engage a variety of district stakeholders, including property and business owners, civic leaders, and residents into the development of the plan. The external assessment included: a review of recent planning efforts, a downtown market assessment, one-on-one interviews, facilitated focus groups, and an online stakeholder survey.

Step 2: Internal Organizational Assessment

The goal of the internal organizational assessment was to evaluate Montclair Center's ability to effectively address challenges and capitalize on opportunities affecting the district. This included a comprehensive review of the programs, financing tools, budgets, and organizational structure. "Best practices" from comparable downtown management organizations in areas identified for improvement were also integrated into this step.

Step 3: Synthesis, Leadership Retreat, and Strategic Plan

Following completion of steps 1 and 2, the consultant team prepared the draft strategic plan with findings from the external and internal assessments, plus recommendations for Montclair Center's goals, objectives, programs, and projects. The draft plan was vetted with the Montclair Center's Board of Directors during a virtual workshop. This feedback was used to finalize the strategic plan.

Plan Working Group and Board Review

The strategic planning process was overseen by a Working Group that included the Montclair Center BID Board of Director's executive committee. The Working Group provided creative input into plan concepts, a reality check on evolving recommendations and reviewed draft planning documents. The consultant team was also able to participate in Montclair Center BID Board of Directors meetings throughout the process, from November 2020 through May 2021.

Strategic Plan Working Group

In addition to the BID staff team, the following board members served in an advisory capacity to help guide the strategic planning process:

- ▽ Matt Silverman (Chair)
- ▽ Lisa Johnson (Board President)
- ▽ Jason Gleason (BID Executive Director)
- ▽ Jose Barreiro
- ▽ Jeff Beck
- ▽ Ashley Cyrus
- ▽ Jaji Packard
- ▽ Sue Schultz
- ▽ Nat Testa



(2). Stakeholder Engagement Summary

The community engagement strategy was intentional in taking a broad approach to the definition of “stakeholder”, factoring in the interest of property owners, along with those who live, work, and play in Montclair Center. In total, well over 1,000 stakeholders and community members offered their feedback on the future of Montclair Center, capturing a wide range of perspectives. The COVID-19 pandemic raised several challenges for community outreach. However, the emergence of virtual meeting technology opened a new set of opportunities for engaging the public.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Between October 2020 and March 2021, the consultant team conducted 55 stakeholder interviews to learn about the district’s strengths, challenges, and desired improvements for the Montclair Center BID organization and the district more broadly. The interviews represented diverse interests and perspectives, including property owners, small business owners, developers, residents, visitors, Montclair Township staff, current and former BID board members, elected officials, community organizations, representatives of event venues, and hotels.

Overarching Themes

Overarching themes from this stakeholder outreach included:

- **Basics Covered:** Overall, the BID is doing a great job providing basic cleaning and maintenance services.
- **Township Relationship:** Many interviewees mentioned that a better relationship could be forged between the BID and the Township. More collaboration would be beneficial to work on shared goals, including implementation of desired safety improvements on Bloomfield Avenue, creating more outdoor seating, and public space enhancements.
- **New Developments:** Many stakeholders are excited about the Lackawanna Plaza and Seymore Street redevelopments. The BID should be proactive and work with property owners to attract desired uses.
- **Affordability:** Many stakeholders have expressed that Montclair is becoming unaffordable, less diverse, small businesses are being displaced, and it is beginning to lose its identity.
- **Event Assistance and Marketing:** The BID should continue to play a role in organizing and promoting signature community events (i.e., Film Festival).
- **Be Visionary:** There is an opportunity for the BID to be even *more* visionary and creative moving forward.

Priority District Improvements

During the interviews, participants were asked about their top three improvements for the district and the BID. The most frequent answers are as follows:

- **Bloomfield Avenue Improvements:** Implement the Township’s *SAFE* plan, which includes pedestrian improvements for safety, lighting, crossings, streetscape, and wayfinding on Bloomfield Avenue and adjacent streets.
- **Parking:** Improve the parking experience (supply, management, employee parking, wayfinding signage), ensuring meters are functional and rules are clearly identified, expand short-term parking options, and explore 15–30-minute free parking for quick visits.

- **Aesthetic Improvements:** Improve building facades, and the sidewalks and streetscape for the entire district.
- **More Public Space:** Create a permanent public plaza, add more outdoor seating and outdoor dining options, and expand parklets.
- **Attract More Affordable Shops for Daily Needs:** for example, a butcher, cheese shop, modern food court, dry cleaners, and other neighborhood-serving retail and services.
- **Creative Marketing:** More could be done to market Montclair to neighboring cities and maximize the use of technology to attract people regionally.
- **Market the Arts:** The BID, Township, and other key partners should market the arts community as a regional destination.
- **Improve the Music Scene:** Work with property owners to attract smaller music and performance venues, particularly in the 200 to 400-person capacity range.

Priority BID Improvements

Stakeholders were asked to identify the most important services that could be offered by the BID to improve the district. Top priorities included the following:

- **Diversify Businesses and Fill Vacancies:** Vacancies and high turnover for commercial space in Montclair Center has been a trend (not just COVID related). The BID should be proactive and work with property owners to attract desired uses and diversify the mix of retail and other businesses (e.g. more daily services needed with less focus on restaurants).
- **Public Spaces:** Be more deliberate in promoting desired types of public spaces, working with developers on new projects to provide input on improvements as well as the management of the public spaces.
- **Communication:** Improve communications with property owners, business owners, and residents about what is going on in downtown as well as with the BID.
- **Events:** Continue to assist and promote community gatherings and events (i.e., Film Festival).
- **Expand Geographical Focus:** Make improvements to the East End, similar to Church St. (expand focus outside of "the core.")
- **Anti-displacement:** Help protect and preserve small businesses that cannot afford increasing rents.
- **Business Assistance:** Assist new/small businesses that may not be able to survive COVID-19.
- **Employment:** Work with property owners to attract additional office space/primary employment.
- **Grocery Store Implementation:** The BID and the Township should continue to work together with the developer to ensure that an affordable grocery store is recruited for Lackawanna Plaza.

A full summary of the interviews can be found in the appendix.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

To gather broad input beyond interviews and stakeholder meetings, an online community survey was developed and distributed through the BID website, social media, elected officials, partner organizations, employers, residential, and other channels. The survey ran from February through the end of March 2021, and resulted in a total of **973 responses**. Respondents represented diverse ages, incomes, and stakeholder types within downtown and beyond.

A full community survey summary can be found in the appendix.

Key findings from the survey include:

Demographics

- 70% of respondents identify as white, 9% as Black/African-American, 5% as Hispanic/Latinx, and 3% as Asian, and 2% chose "other." 13% preferred not to answer.
- The age group with the most representation was 50- to 64-year-olds (36% of respondents), followed by 35- to 49-year-olds (27% of respondents).
- Nearly two-thirds of respondents were women.
- Montclair residents who live *outside* of the district made up 45% of survey respondents. 21% live in the Montclair Center district. Half of respondents live in 07042 (which includes the district), 16% live in 07043 (Upper Montclair), and much of the remainder reside in adjacent zip codes.
- Over half of survey participants have household incomes over \$100,000.
- 10% of respondents own a business in Montclair Center, and 6% own property in Montclair Center.
- Roughly 22% of respondents spent time in Montclair Center daily (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic). Another 47% were in the district at least once per week.

Rating Current Montclair Center Conditions & Services (prior to the pandemic)

- The highest rated services/conditions were **landscaping and tree maintenance** (75% selected 'good' or 'very good') and **sidewalk and street cleaning (including trash removal)**, which also received roughly 75% of responses as 'good' or 'very good.' 70% of survey participants consider **programming (e.g., events) -- the third highest rated pre-pandemic service/condition -- to be 'good' or 'very good.'**
- The lowest rated services/conditions were **pedestrian safety** – 56% rated this category as 'fair,' 'poor,' or 'very poor' – and **snow removal** (only 10% would qualify snow removal as 'very good'). Note: "*safety in general*" is not as much of a concern as *pedestrian safety* in particular.

Comfort Level Returning to Downtown

- Not surprisingly, people are **most comfortable with outdoor festivals and events** as physical distancing measures are lifted in the next few months (42% 'very comfortable' and 37% 'somewhat comfortable').
- **80%** of respondents are 'very comfortable' or 'somewhat comfortable' with **in-person shopping**.
- **Slightly fewer (67%)** are 'very comfortable' or 'somewhat comfortable' with **personal services** like salons, barbers, and spas). The comfort level for **restaurants and coffee shops** is similar – roughly 67%.

Priorities Over the Next 18 Months

- By far, the highest rated priority is **providing assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs** (78% chose 'very important') over the next 18 months.
- The second and third highest priorities are **improving the parking experience** and **ensuring downtown is diverse and welcoming to all**.

Longer Term Priorities

- When asked to provide **three words that best describe respondents' vision** for Montclair Center in the year 2030 (Question 5), the top five most common words were:
 - *Diverse* (222)
 - *Vibrant* (175)
 - *Safe* (93)
 - *Parking (i.e., improved parking experience)* (93)
 - *Fun* (81)

PREVIOUS PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

During the strategic plan outreach process, many stakeholders commented on several previous BID and Township plan recommendations that should be acknowledged and carried forward in the 2021 Montclair Center BID Strategic Plan. Brief summaries are outlined on the following pages (*full summaries can be found in the appendix*).

Transformation Strategies for Downtown Montclair (“Strategic Plan Lite”), 2019

While not a full strategic plan, a recent planning effort undertaken with assistance from New Jersey Main Street and the National Main Street Center was a springboard for this strategic planning process. It included an online stakeholder survey that was completed by 499 respondents.

The report focused on applicable Transformation Strategies commonly used in the Main Street model’s Four Points system. The three recommended strategies for Montclair Center to pursue in the longer-term were:

- *Destination Dining Center & Entertainment* – as restaurants are the clear driver of economic activity in Montclair Center, moving forward more deliberate initiatives aimed at a balance of independent and national/chain restaurants. Additionally, more entertainment and nightlife options should be considered to entice visitors to stay downtown longer.
- *Amenities for Downtown Residents* – The BID can help ensure that amenities and retail that cater to downtown residents are available, particularly as new housing units are built.
- *Church Street Retail* – This section of downtown could benefit from its own distinct strategy, with a particular focus on maintaining and expanding upscale/luxury retail offerings.

Other relevant take-aways include:

- Parking and traffic stood out as top challenges among survey respondents.
- Enhanced placemaking strategies can be used to help to activate downtown sub-districts.
- “Day” and “night” activation strategies should be implemented. Opportunities for daytime-oriented uses for residents (cafes, coworking spaces, fitness, convenience retail, prepared foods, and pet amenities) should be considered.

Montclair Center BID Strategic Plan 2012-2017

Drafted in 2012, the Montclair Center BID Strategic Plan served as a 5-year organizational blueprint to help guide the BID’s priorities and programs. The planning process included a SWOT (“strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats”) analysis and an online community survey completed by 605 respondents.

The suggested organizational vision includes four main tenets:

- 1) Market, advertise, and grow events to bring people downtown;
- 2) Maintain and enhance the physical environment to increase social and economic commerce;
- 3) Manage and cultivate the business mix by recruiting complimentary businesses and retain existing business including retail, office and commercial uses; and
- 4) Expand financial, partner, & volunteer resources to implement activities.

The plan’s recommendations are organized into four goal areas: Enhancing Economic Value, Enhancing Physical Value, Enhancing Social/Marketing Value, and Enhancing Civic/Resource Value.

There are several opportunities that remain relevant in 2021, including:

- Creating pedestrian enhancements, including “complete streets”
- Positioning the BID as a go-to resource for business attraction and retail mix management

- Enhancing the BID's brand
- Diversifying revenue sources

Montclair SAFE: Complete Streets Implementation Plan, 2017 (link)

According to the 2017 township-wide SAFE ("*Streets Are For Everyone*") plan, transportation corridors that should be given priority when funds for improvements are allocated include:

- Mountain Ave.
- Orange Rd./Bell St.
- Hillsdale Ave./Church St./Glenridge
- S. Fullerton Ave.
- Elm St./Grove St.
- Maple Ave./Pine St.
- *Note that Bloomfield Avenue was excluded from this study due to other ongoing efforts along that road.*

A map located in the full past plan overview in the appendix describes the street typologies and illustrates these priority corridors. The recommendations categorize improvements into treatments that can be applied to roadway segments, all intersections or signalized intersections. The plan provides detailed information on typical applications, concept designs, and photos showing local and regional examples.

Montclair Township Unified Land Use + Circulation Element, May 2015 (Amended December 2020) (plan link)

A 2015 Unified Land Use and Circulation Plan (updated in 2020) was prepared to help meet the needs of future residents of Montclair. The purpose of linking land use and circulation recommendations together was to ensure that future growth and development in the Township is met with supportive infrastructural improvements, and vice versa. The process of preparing this plan fully engaged the community and raised awareness of the many planning issues impacting Montclair Township:

- The district contains an eclectic mix of distinctive late 19th/early 20th century commercial architecture and with a local historic district designation since 2002.
- The Montclair Historic Preservation Commission works closely with property owners and businesses to ensure that changes to buildings in the district maintain the historic integrity of the area.
- The Bloomfield Avenue corridor contains several sub districts, each defined by distinctive characteristics and land uses. These sub districts, moving from east to west, include the Transit Village district, Lackawanna Plaza district, Arts and Entertainment district and Western Gateway district.

Many of the issues and opportunities identified in this plan were also brought up during the 2021 Montclair Center BID Strategic Plan process, particularly Bloomfield Avenue safety, pedestrian and bicycle connections, parking supply and management, zoning, building uses, vacancies, and the need for more "gateways."

Bloomfield Avenue Complete Corridor Plan, 2015 (plan link)

The Bloomfield Avenue Complete Corridor Plan was a collaborative effort, undertaken with significant community participation, to pursue design standards and recommendations for a 4.5-mile, multi-modal transportation corridor in Essex County. The purpose of the project was to address the unique characteristics of this segment of Bloomfield Avenue, which traverses several traditional downtown districts, and carries significant volumes of local and regional traffic, serving average traffic volumes of 18,000 to just over 25,000 vehicles per day.

Recommendations that relate to the future of Montclair Center, consistent with stakeholder feedback from this strategic plan, include the following:

- Major improvements to the intersection of Bloomfield Avenue and North & South Fullerton Avenue/Glenridge Avenue/Church Street and Valley Road are needed.
- Key transit recommendations include improving bus stops and bus information, enforcing parking regulations at bus stops, and providing pull-offs and marked bus loading areas.
- The “Six Points” intersection in Montclair Center has plans for traffic calming and intersection adjustments in for final approvals.



(3). Existing Organizational Conditions

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Board of Directors & Committees

The Montclair Center Business Improvement District (BID) is managed by the Montclair Center Corporation, a 501c3 nonprofit organization (both organizations are known collectively as the Montclair Center BID). The 21-seat Board of Directors consists of seven property owners, seven business owners, two council members (representing Ward 3 and Ward 4), one resident, one nonprofit, and three at-large members.

There are eight board committees that meet regularly:

- Executive Committee
- Budget & Finance
- Nominations
- Visual Improvements & Streetscape
- Marketing & Programming
- Property Owner & Real Estate
- Parking & Pedestrian Safety
- Audit

Staffing

The organization has grown over the last several years. In 2015, the team consisted of five staff members (Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, and three Ambassadors). By 2019, several new positions were created, including the Deputy Director and the Marketing & Events Director. As of April 2021, the BID employs eight paid staff:

- Executive Director
- Deputy Director
- Marketing & Events Director
- Administrative Assistant & Community Liaison
- Ambassador Supervisor
- Ambassadors (3)

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The Montclair Center BID organizes its budget into core programming areas, including quality of life, visual improvements, advertising & marketing, business development & retention, and events & programs. Other costs (office rent and payroll) are included in separate categories.

According to the 2021 approved budget, the organization anticipates \$690,860 in annual revenue – nearly all of this revenue comes from BID assessments. Other sources include \$15,000 in contributions and grants, \$9,600 from subleases, and \$500 in interest income. Payroll and benefits account for 60% of the budget.

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

“Quality of life” programming includes clean, safe, and green efforts with expenses anticipated at \$18,000 (or 2% of the total budget), not including the \$150,000 Ambassador program staffing costs. The actual proportion of the Ambassador program (operations and Ambassador team) is nearly 25% of the BID budget.

The Ambassador team is comprised of a Maintenance Supervisor and three uniformed Ambassadors. The Ambassadors work to maintain and beautify the downtown, while serving as the “eyes and ears” for all activity in the BID. These employees monitor and address maintenance needs and other conditions along the walkways, streets, and alleys throughout the Montclair Center BID. They tend to greening elements and flowers in large planters and hanging baskets, in addition to monitoring public amenities including trees, and removing branches that might present a hazard. The team is responsible for periodic graffiti removal, and also removes snow from crosswalks. The Ambassadors visit merchants and respond to their requests. During downtown events, they set up and break down tables and tents, and provide additional cleaning services.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Advertising, public relations, and marketing account for \$40,000 (or 9%) of the 2021 approved BID budget. This figure does not include payroll. A more accurate estimate of the budget devoted to marketing and communications is closer to 25% (or more). Three staff members play at least a part-time role in marketing and communications. The BID Deputy Director’s primary responsibility is communications, and she is supported by the Marketing & Events Director and the Administrative Assistant.

The BID utilizes a relatively sophisticated suite of print and online advertising tools, design & branding, and consistent social media and in-person communications. Highlights include:

- A growing social media following: as of March 2021, the BID’s Instagram page had 10,000 followers, compared to just over 2,000 at the end of 2016.
- Distribution of a monthly e-newsletter that reaches over 12,000 subscribers, including BID stakeholders and consumers from across the region.
- Advertising special event ads in NJ Monthly, full-page ads in Montclair Local, and frequent press releases.
- In-person communication with business owners to promote programs and opportunities (including grant announcements), often targeting stakeholders who respond less frequently to digital correspondence.
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software is used to track BID stakeholders.

Moving forward, there may be more opportunities to revamp the BID’s branding. The BID should continue to focus on telling the “story” of Montclair Center, as well as promoting the organization’s full suite of services. In addition to spotlighting businesses and special initiatives, social media should be used to highlight the work of the Ambassadors and the BID’s role in maintaining a clean and beautiful downtown.

The year-long pause on events caused by the pandemic, as well as the need to amplify stakeholder communications during the COVID-19 pandemic, created greater staff responsibilities within communications and marketing. BID staff, with support from Red Root Marketing, created a series of well-received, creative communications to promote businesses and to disseminate public health announcements. Promotional efforts adapted to help businesses endure the shutdown, including initiatives like “Takeout Tuesday,” a campaign that encouraged residents to support district restaurants. In coordination with the Township, the BID actively promoted the “Love Our Montclair” social media campaign and corresponding downtown banner design.



BUSINESS & MEMBER SUPPORT SERVICES

Roughly 2% of the BID’s budget is slated for business development & retention programming. This figure does not include staffing resources devoted to business development and outreach. The three aforementioned staff who provide marketing and communications support also play a role in the business development programming. The Marketing & Events Director has led the BID’s successful business workshop series – and also provides hands-on support to businesses (i.e., troubleshooting social media and technology). The BID’s Administrative Assistant & Community Liaison supports business outreach efforts and also maintains the organization’s databases.

The BID provides a range of support services to its constituents, from one-on-one troubleshooting to business workshop series. Services provided by BID staff include:

- Workshops offered free of charge to businesses within the BID (currently taking place online, with in-person sessions starting by June 2021 in the BID’s new office space). Topics include WordPress, ecommerce, social media content, finance, and merchandising. CARES Act funding allowed the BID to offer additional business workshops.
- BID staff regularly make in-person visits to at least six businesses per week, to relay information about grant programs, encourage them to engage with social media and to subscribe to new BID-driven initiatives like the Beyond Main online platform.
- BID staff refer prospects to organizations like the SBA and to private firms to assist with business planning.
- Occasionally, the BID provides ribbon cutting ceremonies for new businesses.

Despite the pandemic, new initiatives emerged in 2020, including “Fresh Air Montclair,” a program that brings art to businesses and vacant storefronts in the district. The initiative has invigorated property owners, businesses, and the arts community. As of early 2021, nineteen mixed-media, photography, sculpture and other artistic installations were installed throughout the district. “Late Night Thursdays” was a promotion that began in September 2020 to encourage businesses to stay open with later hours.

Through the BID Executive Director’s involvement with the Montclair Business Association (MBA), created during the summer of 2020 in response to the pandemic, the BID



helped to usher in initiatives like temporary street closures, allowing loosening of restrictions around sidewalk usage, and parking discounts/fine reductions.

EVENTS

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BID produced a number of events year-round. Multiple staff members took part in planning, marketing, and executing events, ranging in scale and frequency. Larger scale signature events have included Montclair Center Stage (an event that typically features dozens of performers), Montclair Fashion Night, and Oktoberfest. The BID also organized two Montclair Art Walks annually, Le Petit Night Market, the holiday Tree Lighting ceremony, and Ladies' Night Out. Retail-oriented promotions organized by the BID have included the Sidewalk Sale and Small Business Saturday.

While many events were canceled in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, new initiatives emerged. For example, the "Pop Goes the Plaza" street closure pilot project was launched in the summer of 2020, resulting in temporarily activated spaces to accommodate socially-distanced dining and entertainment.



(4). Market Considerations

The following summary relates to both current and pre-COVID economic trends and data. Data was compiled using primary and secondary sources, including Esri Business Analyst, real estate reports, the U.S. Census Bureau, and other available sources. *A full market snapshot can be found in the appendix.*

OVERVIEW

Montclair Township is a suburban community in Essex County, New Jersey. While largely composed of comparatively affluent, single-family residential neighborhoods, its commercial corridors like Montclair Center give it a decidedly urban vibe. Montclair Center in particular is renowned for its shopping and dining offerings, attracting visitors from a wide radius. The Township is well-connected to New York City and surrounding areas through its six commuter train stations.

The Township's total population is just under 40,000, according to 2019 census estimates, with sustained growth anticipated over at least the next decade. Montclair's employment base consists predominately of small firms (i.e., services, finance, and other professional fields), with larger institutions like Montclair State University (MSU) employing several thousand workers.

In addition to MSU - with an annual enrollment of over 20,000 students, Montclair has several other cultural institutions of importance. For example, the Montclair Art Museum is home to an impressive rotation of American and Native American art and offers a range of educational and cultural programs for the community. The community is also known for Montclair Film, which has grown from a week-long film festival to a nonprofit that curates film, music, and arts programming and education year-round.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM MARKET RESEARCH

Montclair's residential desirability (accelerated by COVID) will continue to grow.

The pandemic fiercely accelerated the demand for suburban homeownership, especially in places with urban amenities, like Montclair. Home values in Montclair increased almost 10% over the past year, and are predicated to increase at least that rate in 2021.¹ New multi-family construction has also persisted throughout Montclair Center during the pandemic. Significant new mixed-use developments emerged in the past several years, with a handful of catalytic projects on the immediate horizon. In short, the pandemic accelerated the trend of people moving away from expensive cities (New York City) to outer sub-markets.

"Montclair is the kind of suburb that even appeals to demanding New Yorkers. It has yoga studios, restaurants you can walk to, art galleries, even a film festival...it's always been popular *but now on a completely different scale.*" - NPR story from July 4, 2020, "[COVID Pandemic Pushes Many in New York City to Suburbs:](#)"

Displacement will likely be a defining issue in the years ahead.

While the growing and enduring desirability of Montclair can be seen as positive for the Montclair Center BID, there is real risk that the gentrification already underway – especially in Ward 4 and in adjacent neighborhoods – will escalate to such an extent that many more households will be displaced, and that the community could lose

¹ Could increase 11.7% over the next year.

its racial and economic diversity. There are, essentially, “two worlds” in Montclair: one of the predominately white, educated, well-to-do, and another less wealthy and increasingly unable to afford to live in Montclair. Maintaining racial, economic, and social diversity was cited as a top goal by many of the stakeholders interviewed.

Reimagination of Montclair’s retail environment may be needed.

Montclair Center has a stellar reputation as a dining and retail destination. While it has suffered some losses as a result of the pandemic, smaller and mid-sized downtowns are poised to recover more swiftly than larger, urban centers. There is some concern about retaining a diverse array of retail and restaurants that cater to a range of income levels. Other risks include displacement of long-standing and independent retailers to national chains.

- There is an opportunity for the BID to play a more proactive role in curating the storefront economy and help fill available spaces with an appropriate balance of uses and types of retail and services.
- Expanding the retail base is key to increasing daytime activity.² As people continue to move downtown, neighborhood-serving retail and services (cafes, convenience markets and prepared food) would do well.

The future of office is uncertain, but there is optimism regarding opportunities to expand office uses in Montclair.

The nature of work was already being disrupted before the pandemic hit, as more workers started working remotely, but the office market more than any other sector is difficult to predict in terms of post-COVID recovery. Not everyone will return to the office. Many companies will take a hybrid approach, with remote work encouraged several days per week. As a result, office footprints will likely shrink. The outlook for suburban markets like Montclair is cautiously optimistic – as more companies will opt for a series of smaller satellite offices rather than one consolidated urban office.

- Generally, the office real estate market will need to be reimagined and retooled. There will be increased demand for flexible office floorplans. Moreover, more coworking spaces will likely be in high demand.
- Tie-in to the desire to broaden Montclair’s base of primary employment and attract more jobs. Build a stronger base of employees who live and work in Montclair (according to pre-COVID estimates, only 10% both live and work in the community).

² Key recommendation from the 2019 Transformation Strategies.

(5). Conclusions

Based on the review of internal conditions, external market factors, stakeholder input, and inspiration from “best practices” in other cities, the 2021 Montclair Center BID Strategic Plan is influenced by six key conclusions:

Post COVID, growth is likely to attract new businesses and investment, and also intensify pressure on displacement.

The pandemic has accelerated demographic and lifestyle trends that were already influencing the growth of Montclair. Examples of these trends include households relocating from large urban areas to smaller second-tier cities, consumer preferences favoring a unique and specialized shopping and dining experience, and innovations in the use of public space by closing streets, activating alleys, and enlivening plazas for increased outdoor seating options. These trends categorically favor urban and suburban districts such as Montclair Center that offer a welcoming small-town atmosphere with urban amenities, economic opportunity, and ample shopping, dining, and cultural offerings. This is a double-edged sword for Montclair – on one hand, the community should expect continued in-migration of skilled and affluent households, while on the other hand these market trends are likely to result in rising housing costs, the threat of business and residential displacement, and further dilution of its working-class roots, with implications for diminished racial, ethnic, and economic diversity.

While the BID cannot solve displacement challenges caused by overarching market forces, it should strive to boost its advocacy role and impact policymaking (and other initiatives vis-à-vis the Township and civic groups) – and to integrate an equity lens throughout its work. By strengthening small community-serving businesses and being intentional to spread program benefits throughout the district, the BID can aim to promote economic balance and inclusion as the district evolves.

The BID should strive to adopt a hybrid management model that includes both urban and suburban operational and organizational initiatives.

While the Main Street management approach has been tremendously valuable in helping Montclair Center BID get to where it is today, the BID is at a critical juncture in its evolution as an innovative urban district. The BID should introduce more sophisticated urban district management approaches, as most successful downtown organizations found in other small- and medium-sized cities have embraced. An urban district management model anticipates and responds to the changing market dynamics of the district and its surrounding communities. It encourages a BID to be nimble and more flexible as the community changes over time. It can elevate an organization’s influence vis-à-vis the big-picture issues impacting the district, from economic development, investment, and equity, to policy and the long-term community vision. Key differences between the Main Street and urban district approaches are summarized in the following table.

	Main Street Approach	Urban District Management Approach
General Overview	Main Street is a national program based on a four-point approach to district revitalization, including design, marketing, and economic restructuring. Strong support from the State of New Jersey.	The urban district management approach, typically found in larger cities and urban districts, offers a tailored work program based on an understanding of local real estate and market dynamics, opportunities, and challenges.
Core Philosophy	Historic Preservation	Market-Based/Economic Vitality
Best Fit	Rural and smaller markets and start-ups. Main Street also has an urban-focused program in cities with multiple districts.	Urban downtowns and districts, often include and/or start with BIDs to provide a reliable source of revenue.
Resources	Often lean organizations and budgets. Main Street requires a full-time director. Municipalities often share in financial support.	Diversified revenue, often anchored by a BID, can also include memberships, sponsorships, municipal support and earned income.
Stakeholder Drivers	Usually merchants/retail tenants provide most of the energy for a Main Street program.	Property owners are key drivers, along with tenants and residents.
Staffing	Usually, lean. Most Main Streets have one or two staff persons and rely heavily on volunteers.	Staffing is matched to programs, needs and resources. Usually, a professional staff with clean and safe, marketing, economic development and other program support.
Role of Board	Both policy and program – very common for board members to volunteer to implement programs on an ongoing basis.	Usually more related to policy and guidance, less on implementation. More common model among larger non-profits.
National Support Organization	National Main Street Center	Urban Main Street & International Downtown Association

A stronger working partnership with the Township will benefit Montclair Center and the community-at-large.

The BID should bridge the gap with the Township and other agencies to solve infrastructure and business climate issues. A critical step in Montclair Center’s evolution is to continue its focus on place enhancement and activation. The BID can respect Montclair’s unique historical context and invite the township’s residents to participate in art, culture, streetscape elements, and programming that enriches the downtown experience. Connectivity and enhancements to the public realm, including connections to Bay Street Station, are important improvements that can benefit from the BID’s leadership, focus, and collaboration with the Township. As the heart of and a major economic generator for Montclair, a strong downtown will also benefit the entire community.

The BID can strengthen its role in helping guide a prosperous business district.

While Montclair Center is experiencing demand for new hotels, office, housing, and restaurants in a positive way, there are also major concerns with displacement pressures. There is a need and desire to protect small independent businesses. During the outreach process, there was an overwhelming response from small business owners that sustained, meaningful support is needed. Participants also cited filling storefronts as a top priority to improving the downtown experience. Currently, the Township does not play a strong role in economic development or direct business support services.

Through a new focus on economic development, the BID will be able to more effectively advocate for policies that further drive downtown's development and support small businesses in a balanced way. The BID can fill an important economic development role for downtown and benefit the Township by strengthening efforts to retain and recruit businesses and jobs, while also working to strengthen the area's unique independent businesses. A balance should be sought between the recruitment of regional and national brands and unique independent businesses.

The BID should distribute benefits throughout the entire district.

Equity and inclusion have been identified as priorities, and the BID can be more deliberate about the deployment of resources designed to reach all corners of the district. For clean, safe and green services, the deployment of resources can be designed to reach all parts of the district. Promotions and events should strategically seek to expand their reach when practical, and periodic promotions that spotlight all sub-areas should be considered. Smaller neighborhood-oriented events should be considered to support 4th Ward businesses. A greater emphasis on economic development can also support exiting and new businesses throughout the entire BID boundary.

The BID can also be more intentional about inclusive representation on its board and committees. Stakeholders should be recruited from throughout the district. The demographic diversity of adjacent neighborhoods and Montclair Center's customer markets should be considered in the composition of the BID's board and committees, and considered within programming to promote the district. Montclair offers a rich tapestry of racial groups and nationalities that should be reflected in the BID's communications and operational dimensions.

The BID should employ new operational practices and systems.

Moving to a more urban district management model, the Montclair BID needs to adopt more formal operational practices and systems. Creating more definition between board and staff roles for the organization is critical. Generally speaking, board members should be involved in the "big picture" policy leadership and serve as ambassadors to the greater community, and have a limited role in the day-to-day functioning of the organization. The day-to-day execution of programs and initiatives should be entrusted to the MCBID staff. Accountability is provided by creating measurable benchmarks for the executive director, and having the board's executive committee periodically monitor overall progress to meet these benchmarks.

To implement the goals, objectives and tactics within the strategic plan, the Montclair Center BID will need to realign staffing and committees. Financial sustainability will be key, keeping BID resources in step with the new investment and program demands in the growing district, and looking to diversify funding more aggressively beyond BID assessments.

(6). Revised Vision & Mission Statements

Montclair Center’s existing organizational vision and mission statements date back a decade or more. To keep up with changing market dynamics and stakeholder priorities, these statements should be refreshed during strategic planning processes every five to ten years.

The organizational vision offers the “big picture” view of downtown – what we are trying to achieve for Montclair Center. The mission relates more to the “how” – the role of the organization to achieve the vision. Building from existing statements, below are suggested revised vision and mission statements to carry Montclair Center forward from 2021 and beyond.

VISION

Montclair Center is a vibrant, thriving, and welcoming mixed-used commercial district where all residents and visitors can enjoy a variety of retail, restaurants, services, office, residential, and cultural options.

MISSION

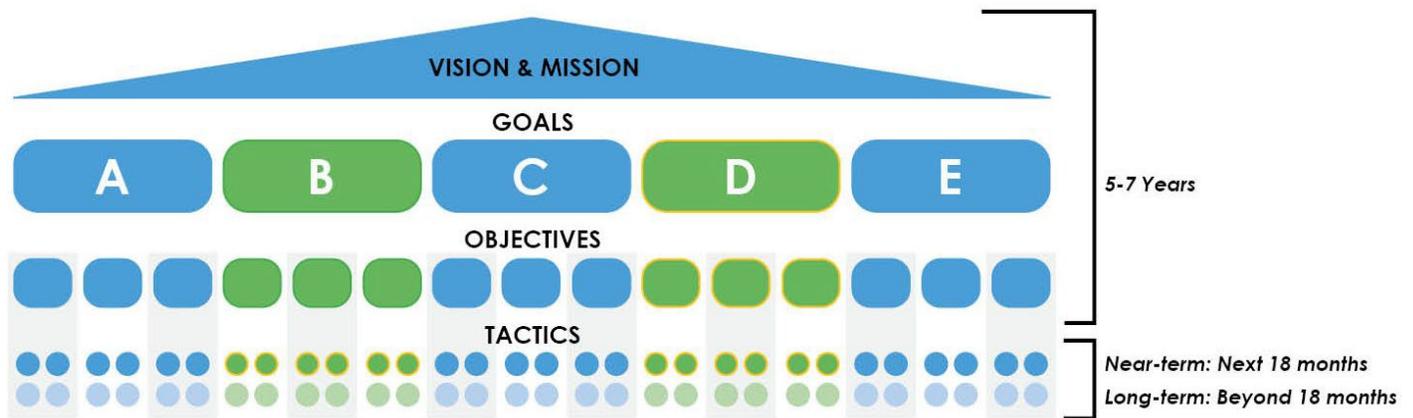
The mission of the Montclair Center BID is to create a visually appealing, prosperous and inclusive downtown through continuous marketing, programming, economic development, advocacy, cleaning and beautification.



(7). Goals, Objectives, And Tactics

The following section is the heart of the strategic plan. The goals and objectives respond to the priorities voiced by stakeholders and acknowledge shifts in the Montclair Center marketplace. Tactics relate to tangible programs, services and actions that the Montclair Center BID can take to implement each goal and set of objectives.

The chart below depicts how goals, objectives and tactics are organized in this plan. Each set of goals and objectives establishes a five- to seven-year time horizon for implementation. Tactics are then sorted into near-term and long-term priorities. Near-term tactics suggest initiatives that the Montclair Center BID can pursue over the next 18 months. The near-term also takes into consideration the dynamic of economic recovery from COVID-19. Long-term tactics are recommended for 18 months and beyond, with the expectation that the organization will conduct its next extensive strategic plan within five to seven years.



GOAL A: MAINTAIN A DOWNTOWN THAT IS CLEAN, SAFE, AND GREEN

Why It Matters

A foundational principle of BIDs is to supplement municipal services by offering a higher and more reliable standard of cleanliness and safety. Many BIDs also get involved with various aspects of landscaping, which includes planting and caring for trees, installing plants and other organic elements in large containers, along medians and even in downtown parks. This service enhancement, often referred to as “green” can also incorporate sustainable practices that prioritize the use of environmentally friendly equipment and cleaning products. Some BIDs have been instrumental in advancing sustainability by creating rain gardens and leading other initiatives that benefit and preserve the environment.

The Montclair Center BID receives high marks for maintenance operations and its efforts to keep the BID clean and safe. The work of this small, dedicated group of Ambassadors should be recognized as essential to the BID’s ongoing success.

To further strengthen operations and improve efficiencies, the Montclair BID should implement practices commonly applied in the BID industry. A fundamental task is creating and utilizing systems to document on the

street demands, which provides a framework to establish benchmarks and track progress to anticipate operational needs from year to year.

A best practice for BIDs is to periodically evaluate operations and explore alternative models, including contracting services with seasoned clean & safe vendors that work with BIDs throughout the country. Advantages of outsourcing clean & safe management include freeing up staff time. Often, a new outside contractor will retain a BID's existing Ambassador personnel.

Key Objectives

- Continue to provide a high standard of maintenance to ensure that the Montclair BID is clean and safe on a consistent basis.
- Utilize a Baseline Services Agreement with the Montclair Township to clarify Township responsibilities versus BID enhanced services.
- Document all clean, safe, and green work that is being performed by tracking daily demands, service levels, and establish benchmarks. Develop a series of metrics by which to measure success moving forward.
- Perform clean, safe, and green tasks with efficiency and plan for program expansion based on anticipated growth and increasing demands.
- Use more energy-efficient, electric and battery powered tools, equipment, and vehicles, where feasible.
- To the extent possible, work to achieve an environmentally resilient district by employing eco-friendly best practices in landscaping and maintenance.

Tactics

Shorter Term (Up to 18 months)

1. Negotiate a Baseline Services Agreement with the Township. The document should outline all services that are provided by the both Township and the BID to keep downtown clean, safe and green. The agreement should detail frequency of service and list all parties responsible for completing each task.
2. Generate weekly reports to document work demands and accomplishments.
3. Conduct a thorough clean & safe operations evaluation to assess current program performance, and consider potential opportunities for improvement, including alternative management models, such as outsourcing operations to an outside clean & safe vendor.
4. Research to find the best performing, energy efficient tools, equipment, and vehicles to replace existing items that are damaged, outdated, or unusable.

Longer Term (Beyond 18 months)

5. Identify and implement a user-friendly technology system to chart and track all clean, safe and green related duties, and streamline reporting.
6. Monitor work progress with clean, safe and green efforts and make adjustments to meet demands (e.g., evaluate work tasks, staffing needs, purchase of additional equipment, form relevant partnerships).
7. Coordinate with the Township and the BID's Place Enhancement & Activation Committee on a streetscaping and green infrastructure plan, that would accomplish both ecological and aesthetic goals, including an enhanced tree canopy, native vegetation, and stormwater bioretention through expanded use of tree planters.
8. Explore robust programming and signage to enhance visibility for composting and the creation of community gardens, electric car charging stations, and other sustainability initiatives like encouraging LEED certification of new buildings.

Best Practices

Green Space Management

- *Golden Triangle Business Improvement District in Washington, D.C.* manages more than four acres of parks and green spaces under contract with the National Park Service. Golden Triangle services include landscaping enhancements, maintenance, and activation. The BID was recently recognized by the International Downtown Association for its [streetscaping interventions](#) that include bioretention swales and tree boxes that capture excess runoff.

Contracted Services

- *Easton Main Street* (Easton, PA) contracts the services of a national vendor to provide clean, safe and green services. The 20-block downtown area with a small staff of Ambassadors is worth noting for its cleanliness, landscaping, special events, and successful city partnerships.

GOAL B: EMPLOY MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS APPROACHES THAT PROMOTE THE DISTRICT AND ENGAGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Why It Matters

While the BID employs a relatively sophisticated suite of marketing tools, there are opportunities to expand efforts to broaden the public's understanding of BID services and tell a more compelling story about Montclair Center, and to broadcast and celebrate the BID's successes. Community feedback revealed that some stakeholders lack awareness about what the BID does and the services it provides. In addition to widely promoting its own successes (particularly the work it does to clean, maintain, and beautify the district), the BID should continue to use a variety of communications techniques and social media to highlight downtown businesses, events, partner organizations, and collaborative initiatives.

The BID needs to ensure that communication and benefits are distributed evenly among stakeholders. BID staff spend a considerable amount of time with direct outreach to stakeholders - particularly business owners - so it's not necessarily increased frequency needed, but new tactics. "Ensure downtown is diverse and welcoming to all" was highly rated in the community survey with 68% saying it's "very important." The BID should continue to work with business and property owners in the 4th Ward through digital communication and in-person visits. There is also an opportunity to engage with all diverse interests that make up the Montclair Center community, including the growing downtown residential population.

Overall, stakeholders are satisfied with the BID's programming and events - one of the more highly rated program areas in the online survey. Looking beyond the pandemic, there may be an opportunity to scale back the number of events produced by the BID, as particularly the larger events often require a disproportionate amount of staff time and resources to organize and execute.

Key Objectives

- Increase awareness of the BID's services and value among all Montclair Center stakeholder constituencies, with an emphasis on property owners, businesses, and residents located throughout the BID district.
- Broaden and deepen marketing efforts to tell the story of Montclair Center.
- Create more meaningful engagement opportunities for direct stakeholders (property owners, businesses) and others (visitors, residents) throughout the BID district.

- Strike a balance between social media and traditional communication tactics with downtown stakeholders, particularly business owners.
- Reevaluate events production and consider a variety of smaller events that provide tangible benefits to businesses located throughout the BID district.

Tactics

Shorter Term (Up to 18 months)

1. Continue to create engaging, interactive social media content, including polling, to spark conversation and drive online activity.
2. Continue to produce (and collaborate with organizational and institutional partners on) creative, thematic promotions that drive business and brand downtown as a creative shopping and dining destination.
 - As COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed throughout 2021, develop an advertising campaign with coordinated promotions to invite residents and visitors back to the BID.
 - Post-pandemic, continue the "Late Night Thursdays" promotion to encourage businesses to stay open with later hours.
3. Increase staff and board visibility in the community by convening regular informal engagement opportunities, such as drop-ins at businesses, monthly "coffee chats," meetings at merchant locations, and other informal connections (such as Zoom chats). As mentioned in the Organizational Implications section, consider assigning each board member with one property/business owner contact per month to a) build relationships, and b) hold board members accountable and engaged.
4. Consider specific targeted outreach to restaurants, a market segment that has been harder to reach, by scheduling staff and/or board check-ins (in-person or virtual) with restaurant managers (e.g., during slower weekday nights).
5. Formalize a set of criteria to help the BID decide which events to produce moving forward. The BID should continue a handful of core signature events each year, while prioritizing events co-organized by partner organizations. At minimum, events should achieve the following:
 - Be promoted to drive customers into businesses throughout the district
 - Generate revenue (or be revenue-neutral)
 - Be inclusive and accessible to the whole community
 - Have potential to generate positive press and visibility for the district
 - Can be managed by Montclair Center's existing staff and resources and/or a partner organization.
 - Other questions to consider: does the event celebrate a unique aspect of Montclair? Is it impactful but low-budget and require minimal infrastructure (e.g., street performances versus a full-blown concert series)?

Longer Term (Beyond 18 months)

6. Work with a graphic designer and website developer to give Montclair BID a refreshed brand and logo.
7. Consider reorganizing the BID website and use more interesting homepage menu categories. For example, categories like "Eat Here," "Live Here," "Do Business Here," "Create Here," and/or "Invest Here," are action oriented and showcase Montclair's broad appeal. The homepage menu does not necessarily need to include the existing labels of "Get Here" and "Members."
8. Develop more thematic website content, guides, and itineraries that showcase Montclair's diverse retail, dining, cultural, and seasonal offerings. For example, create "curated experiences" suggestions like "Shop at Woman Owned Stores" (with a list of shops) or "Lunch for Under \$10."

9. Employ sophisticated, broad-reaching marketing efforts to attract visitors from across New Jersey, New York, and beyond.
 - For example, with several new parking garages opening soon, advertising for the district should focus on the narrative that Montclair has *ample* parking.
 - Develop strategies for advertising Montclair Center’s key assets, such as marketing the arts community as a regional destination. Engage with the Montclair Art Center on this strategy.
10. Continue to build out the BID’s customer relationship management (CRM) database, with a specific focus on identifying up-to-date contact information for property and business owners.
11. Pursue creative tactics to engage more residents.
 - To reach new residents living in the district’s multi-family developments, develop relationships with apartment managers and consider cross-promotional events (such as food and beverage tastings) in residential building lobbies.
 - Invite residents to participate in a coalition to implement a public art campaign.
 - Periodically survey downtown residents to identify challenges and opportunities, including neighborhood-serving business types to recruit or encourage in the district.
 - Consider employing more neighborhood crowdsourcing for special projects – tap into the wealth and disposable income in the surrounding neighborhoods. Consider more formalized, sustained methods for community members to support the district.
12. In an effort to attract the Montclair State University student population and strengthen institutional partnerships, continue to try and engage with the institution to promote Montclair Center. Consider targeted marketing campaigns such as a “Welcome Student Weekend” promotion.
13. Conduct more consistent outreach and develop stronger partnerships with Montclair’s faith-based organizations and civic groups.
14. Work to ensure the Township’s communication and marketing efforts are aligned with the BID.
15. Redesign and replace outdated wayfinding signage and kiosks.

Best Practices

Marketing & Branding

- *Downtown Boulder Partnership (Boulder, CO)* – DBP offers a series of “[My Boulder Itineraries](#)” – a compilation of recommendations directly from downtown business owners and managers for “insider” tips for themed itineraries for visiting downtown depending on interests. The Partnership’s website is user-friendly and organized to highlight webpages like “Boulder Alley Gallery, and includes an [interactive illustrative map](#) that takes user on a virtual journey through downtown boulder’s public art exhibits,
- *Downtown Hackensack Alliance (Hackensack, NJ)* – The Alliance initiated the development of a [Creative Arts Team \(CAT\)](#) that works on arts & cultural marketing and programming, murals and public art projects, pop-up parklets, and a strategic planning initiative that culminated in a report on creative placemaking to draw more visitors and residents to the downtown community.
- *Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District (Bridgeport, CT)* – The organization focuses on a well-curated, exciting social media presence, one that highlights a different businesses owner, artist, or resident every week, using professional head shots and thematic colors. Downtown Bridgeport also has strong brand recognition both on and off social media, utilizing branding and design standards set forth in its “[Colorful Bridgeport](#)” plan.

Resident Engagement

- *Bixby Knolls Business Improvement District (Long Beach, CA)* – employs a multi-pronged stakeholder engagement approach. Through daily executive director visibility in the district, creative ever-evolving business promotions, relationship building, frequent and varied communication. Through its 501c3 affiliate, the BID also crowdsources funding from residential neighbors to support special projects such as public art installations.
- *Long Beach Residential Council (Long Beach, CA)* – Many BIDs and downtown organizations like the Downtown Long Beach Alliance have residential outreach and programming components ranging from community advocacy, resident-oriented branding, and leadership-building opportunities.

GOAL C: BROADEN SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES & PROPERTY OWNERS

Why It Matters

Stakeholder feedback revealed a clear priority for economic development and business support services through COVID-19 recovery and beyond. Maintaining Montclair Center's vibrant shopping and dining experience and diverse array of small businesses was consistently identified as a top priority: "recruit new businesses and diversify the retail mix" was the top answer when survey respondents were asked to choose the *most* important action item for long-term improvement of the district.

Downtowns in small, unique cities are poised to recover relatively well compared to other retail centers (including major urban downtowns and shopping malls). However, full recovery will take up to several years and the BID's role to help small businesses evolve and prosper beyond COVID-19 is a critical element for shoring up downtown's economic vitality. Providing assistance and resources to small businesses and entrepreneurs was the highest rated priority over the next 18 months from respondents to the online survey. It was also the third highest priority when asked to choose the single most important action item for the longer term.

The BID has an opportunity to become Montclair's "go to" organization for business recruitment and support, and a resource for existing and prospective property owners and investors. Relationship building with businesses and other stakeholders will continue to be essential. Likewise, the BID has an opportunity to be a central resource for economic and market data. With the lack of other economic development entities in Montclair, the BID is the logical organization to help fill the data gap and presenting data use as a recruitment tool to help sustain continued growth and investment.

Other market sectors that the BID will support moving forward include office, particularly as the future of work post-COVID will likely take on a hybrid form of in-person and remote office options. The BID has an opportunity to support commercial properties beyond ground-floor and help fill second story offices.

Key Objectives

- Continue to support small business recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Position the BID as a "go-to" resource for downtown market information and as a "welcome center" for new businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors
- Encourage a diverse storefront economy by addressing Montclair Center's vacant storefronts, retail mix, and business recruitment, and work to ensure an appropriate balance between neighborhood-serving and "destination" retail, restaurants, and services.
- Re-focus business support efforts to assist existing and legacy businesses, new small enterprises, and encourage ownership by people of color.

- Attract primary employers and new office uses to Montclair Center.

Tactics

Shorter Term (Up to 18 months)

1. Continue to offer COVID recovery-related support for small businesses, through at least the end of 2021. This can include helping businesses apply and position themselves for new 2021 COVID federal recovery funding opportunities.
2. Launch (and evaluate the success of) the Springboard Montclair Start Up Grant Program as a way to award new and expanding businesses for locating in the district.³
3. Assist entrepreneurs with start-up business ideas (for example: serve as a liaison to permitting with the Township, connect operators to available space, and assist with finding funding resources, etc.), particularly as the post-pandemic economy will likely see a surge in entrepreneurial activity.
4. Continue to grow and widely publicize the BID's business workshop series, aiming to recruit experts to help cover a range of topics, including merchandising, storefront appeal, website management, and social media and marketing. While the new BID office can accommodate large groups, offer virtual attendance options in order to broaden accessibility.
5. Work with property owners, through virtual and in-person outreach to identify appropriate available commercial space, consider implementing a temporary pop-up activation initiative to incubate new business ideas. The BID and partners could subsidize rents to offer low-risk, affordable and flexible spaces for short-term leases.
6. Conduct a district-wide merchandising plan to identify existing retail strengths and vulnerabilities, better understand the appropriate retail, and help direct new retail and restaurant concepts to areas that they are most likely to succeed within the district.
7. Host listening sessions to learn about the opportunities and challenges for filling upper floor office space.

Longer Term (Beyond 18 months)

8. Compile up-to-date real estate and market data on a variety of downtown segments for the property and business owning community and the public at large.
 - Well-packaged reports can be used to support business recruitment and retention efforts. "State of Downtown" reporting can be used to highlight data trends in key market segments including catalytic development projects, and emphasize the impact of the BID on economic development.
 - Metrics could include the retail, office, hospitality, and residential sectors. For example, the BID could monitor the amount of new and leased office space, new or expanding businesses by category, number of new residential units, and if possible, estimates of the public and private dollars invested in the district annually.
 - Data on the larger market base is useful for potential investors - for example, information on the number of households within walking distance to the district could showcase the overall purchasing power of local residential base.
 - Pedestrian counts should also be considered.
9. To adapt to growing demand for smaller-format retail, and for smaller, shared office spaces, the BID can play a role in advising property owners on how to ready their properties to attract high quality tenants,

³ The first-round deadline is June 1, 2021, with winners to be announced July 1. The two awards will \$10,000 (for leasing under 1500 square feet) and \$15,000 for leasing up to \$2300 square feet).

including adaptations for more flexible floor plate formats. The BID could hire a real estate expert to conduct a property owner workshop on the topic.

10. Consider employing a comprehensive property and business inventory and mapping system to keep track of property and business information. A tenant inventory could also be used to capture contact information, tracking of communications, and other information to help establish relationships with businesses. This internal database can also serve as an “early warning” system on expiring leases.
11. Consider re-tooling the Business Welcome Packet to include more language around the BID’s core services and value proposition, benefits of doing business downtown, and opportunities for involvement.
12. Consider the creation of a community investment fund that would offer support for new and existing small, minority, women, and LGBTQ -owned businesses in downtown.

Best Practices

Business Support

- *Morristown Partnership (Morristown, NJ)* – Highlights include the prominence of business support services on website, graphics and resources for starting a business, market data, available space inventory, highly designed plans and reports, periodically updated reports on new commercial development, effective “storytelling” and success touting of the partnership as an economic development partner.
- *Bloomfield Center Alliance (Bloomfield, NJ)* – The Alliance’s website advertises its broad scope of business support services and market information provided on the website related to retail leakage, opportunities, and other market data.
- The *Downtown Ithaca Alliance (NY)* is highly regarded in terms of hands-on approach to rallying the business community in its small but thriving downtown. Business development is a core program area. One example is the BID’s “Off the Clock” initiative, an informal networking event for downtown merchants that occurs quarterly.
- *Downtown Memphis Commission (Memphis, TN)* – The organization implemented a Diversity Outreach Program to engage people of all races and sexes in development projects and recruit more diverse businesses to downtown. The program ensures that projects receiving DMC financial incentives (including a Tenant Improvement Grant program) have at least a 25% minority participation level.

Storefront Recruitment

- *Iowa City Downtown District’s (Iowa City, IA)* – The [Retail Space Build-Out Grant Program](#) was launched in the Spring of 2021 to fill vacancies and support new merchants. Grants of up to \$15,000 are being offered (up to \$30,000 per year). The district will seek out prospects considering the Iowa City market with “pop-up” trials within downtown’s storefronts. The organization is also committed to doubling down on recruitment and hopes to connect interested businesses with established retail mentors.

Promotions

- *The Lancaster City Alliance (Lancaster, PA)* plays a key role in organizing periodic merchant promotions like Indie Retail Week to showcase unique, locally-owned retailers and attract locals and visitors to downtown. The organization also serves as a connector for prospective businesses and available resources from the City and nonprofit entities.
- *Downtown Ithaca Alliance (Ithaca, NY)* – The Collaborative Retail Experience Grant is a pilot project created to encourage more self-generating special promotions among a group of business. The BID offers some assistance and funding (up to 10 micro-grants at \$500 each) for downtown merchants to organize

shared promotional and traffic-generating projects., on a rolling, competitive basis. A BID committee is designated as review body for the idea submissions.

State of Downtown Reporting

- *Capital Riverfront BID (Washington, DC)* – In addition to annual reports, the organization compiles an annual “[State of the Capital Riverfront](#)” report that summarizes key market segments (e.g. number of new office and residential units, vacancy rates, leasing performance, and new businesses opened). This report is presented at the BID’s annual meeting luncheon.
- *Iowa City Downtown District (Iowa City, IA)* – This organization creates [highly designed annual reports](#) that highlight ways the district’s accomplishments and activities align with the mission.

GOAL D: ENHANCE AND CREATE PUBLIC SPACES TO PROVIDE ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCES THROUGHOUT DOWNTOWN

Why It Matters

If a clean and safe environment makes a downtown feel welcoming and comfortable, then an activated and interesting environment makes a downtown stand out from the rest. In an increasingly franchised world, cities, neighborhoods, and downtowns are all vying to make themselves unique. It is a growing role for downtown management organizations to become more involved in the enhancement and activation of public spaces.

For the Montclair Center BID, this includes activating the plazas, parks, and open spaces that already exist in Montclair, making sure these are inviting spaces that people want to use. This also includes working with developers to create new types of public spaces that are currently missing as downtown continues to redevelop. Stakeholders noted that downtown has a few small plazas and squares (i.e., Church Street), but no outdoor venues or permanent plaza space for larger gatherings and events. There is new energy and momentum coalescing around both the Seymour Street and Lackawanna Plaza redevelopments, particularly as places for new outdoor programming.

This goal also includes connectivity throughout downtown – making it easier for people to get around downtown by prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle movement and accessibility. One of the greatest assets of Montclair Center is its compactness which lends to walkability. However, many stakeholders pointed out the barriers of Bloomfield Avenue being so long and wide, several “dead zones” along Bloomfield without activity or non-pedestrian attracting uses, and inadequate wayfinding signage that detract from this and prevent downtown from reaching its full potential. It will be critical to establish a closer working relationship with the Township, particularly related to public investments downtown.

Key Objectives

- Create a downtown that is welcoming and accessible for all people and modes of transportation.
- Make it easier for pedestrians and bicyclists of all abilities to get downtown.
 - Continue to work with and support the efforts of the Township to implement the primary recommendations of the “Montclair SAFE Plan” and the Unified Land Use + Circulation Plan described earlier. Bloomfield Avenue construction may disrupt business. Several tactics to ensure businesses have an opportunity to thrive are provided below.
- Reflect the creativity of the Montclair community through public art, lighting, and other place enhancements that build upon community assets and are intriguing to diverse audiences.
- Elevate arts-related programming, placemaking, and events.

Tactics

Shorter Term (Up to 18 months)

1. Inventory all plazas, parks, open spaces, who has responsibility of each, what's currently being done, and prioritize with planned uses.
2. Identify what could be done in partnership with property owners to support efforts to create enjoyable experiences in downtown.
3. Be more proactive and deliberate in promoting desired types of public spaces as well as the management of them, such as working with the developer of Lackawanna Plaza.
4. Play an integral role in all major projects impacting the public right-of-way, namely the redesign of the intersections on Bloomfield Avenue, ensuring that results help people better move around downtown outside of their cars, particularly focusing on working with the Township to implement the SAFE Plan.
5. Build upon Montclair Center's success during COVID-19 for pop-up events, parklets, and other temporary activations that enliven public spaces. Implement more small-scale, low budget "pop-up" event and activation strategies – such as street performances.
6. Consider implementing pop-up/temporary traffic calming projects during Bloomfield construction. Elements could include low-cost materials like colorfully painted tires, planters, and painted curb extensions. Continue to seek opportunities throughout downtown to incorporate public art of all types.
7. Prioritize pedestrian improvements to southeast end of Bloomfield Avenue (between Elm Street and Maple Avenue) similar to Church Street.
8. Provide assistance to small businesses during Bloomfield Avenue construction disruption. This assistance could include:
 - o Local/BID grants to small businesses to make up portions of a documented revenue gap experienced during construction months
 - o Federal grants or matching funds from partner organizations to bolster resources
 - o BID funds for extra marketing and special events during periods of construction
 - o Temporary wayfinding and signage to account for reduced visibility and access to businesses during construction

Longer Term (Beyond 18 months)

9. Improve street and sidewalk lighting throughout downtown, focusing first on areas around key pedestrian pathways, transit stops, public parking structures and public gathering spaces. Consider opportunities for impact lighting installations that double as public art.
10. Become an active participant in major infrastructure initiatives and policymaking that impact downtown's connections to the surrounding region, such as the proposed circulator shuttle to/from Bay Street Station, the Essex-Hudson Greenway, and the Montclair Center Western Gateway to name a few.
11. Put Montclair "on the map" through a district-wide mural program.

Best Practices

Pop-Up Activation

- *Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. (Grand Rapids, MI)* organizes temporary space activation demonstration projects with community input, including public art, reimagined parking lots, and dog parks. DGRI also recruits both professional and amateur buskers to perform downtown (ranging from musicians, dancers, acrobats, live painters, comedians, live theater, and more). The goal is to create more enjoyable experiences on city sidewalks and patios.

- *The Oakland Avenue (Pittsburgh) Business Improvement District (OBID)*, in partnership with the Pittsburgh Innovation District, launched a public space activation ‘pilot’ initiative to test the public response to creative design interventions. Activation interventions include festival style lighting along street and sidewalk café spaces, sidewalk furniture, and other landscaping elements along the retail corridor. Funding from universities and foundations helped OBID contract with a local landscape architecture firm to carry out the pilot projects.
- *The Hartford Business Improvement District (Hartford, CT)* – The BID hosts and promotes events throughout the year ranging from signature concerts to more informal outdoor “Meditation Mondays.” The city has a growing Latino population, which has prompted a greater variety of fun and culturally-relevant programming, like Salsa Socials.

Murals & Street Art

- *Wynwood BID (Miami, FL)* - The Wynwood BID is home to the highest concentration of street art in the country, with muralists from around the world showcasing their work on buildings throughout the district. The street art has helped spark the district’s renaissance. Today, Wynwood is recognized globally as a premier destination for not just open-air street art, but also fashion, innovation, and creative enterprise. The BID runs an [online inventory](#) with detailed information on all the street art in the district.
- *Wide Open Walls (Sacramento, CA)* – Since 2016, the non-profit organization has helped artists paint 80+ murals across the downtown. Mural creation takes place during various [Wide Open Walls](#) festivals, where local, national, and international artists are invited to transform the city’s walls.

Transformational Projects

- *Golden Triangle BID (Washington, DC)* - The Golden Triangle BID focuses on [advancing “transformational projects” that create significant improvements to the public realm](#). These include the creation and ongoing maintenance of a landscaped median along Connecticut Avenue and a current effort to introduce new bike lanes, landscaping, and wider sidewalks to Pennsylvania Avenue.
- *Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. (Cincinnati, OH)* – Recognizing the public space activation, traffic calming, and economic benefits of street closures, the downtown organization, in conjunction with the City of Cincinnati, has announced plans to make several of street closures related to the temporary expanded outdoor dining program a *permanent fixture* of the downtown landscape. They plan to swap out the concrete barriers (used to close streets and define outdoor dining areas) with more permanent, aesthetically pleasing improvements.

GOAL E: WORK WITH THE TOWNSHIP AND OTHER PARTNERS TO BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE FOR THE DISTRICT

Why It Matters

As downtown’s full-time champion, the BID must build ongoing relationships with the Township – including both staff and elected officials – to collaboratively improve downtown. According to observations and stakeholder feedback, more can be done to ensure Township staff (and not just the elected officials who attend board meetings) are aware of BID-related issues.

The BID is the one organization that is fully chartered to focus day-in and day-out on the economic vitality of Montclair Center. In order to accomplish the longer-term, transformative goals around economic development for the district and beyond, more synergy between the BID and Township is needed.

There are a variety of infrastructure and public space improvements that will require Township resources, plus build stronger approaches with the County and State as needed. Other civic partners should be identified and partnerships developed to be fully responsive to Montclair Center’s needs and to leverage both the limited financial resources and staff capacity of the BID.

Key Objectives

- Strengthen the BID’s role and organizational brand as the day-to-day champion for Montclair Center.
- Establish a collaborative culture with the Township to solve long-term planning, infrastructure, and policy issues that affect Montclair Center.
- Foster partnerships with a variety of civic organizations to leverage BID resources and help solve a variety of downtown challenges.

Tactics

Shorter Term (Up to 18 Months)

1. Seek endorsement and buy-in of the Montclair Center BID Strategic Plan by Montclair Township.
2. With the pending redevelopment of Lackawanna Plaza, work with the property owner to ensure the future grocery store is affordable and will fill the gap in neighborhood-serving needs.
3. Consider continuing the Montclair Business Association to advocate on behalf of the Township’s business community post-COVID. One of the Association’s near-term objectives could be to advocate for an economic development position within the municipal government.
4. Work with the Township to develop parking management policies that support the continued economic development of Montclair Center. An example is the need to create an employee permit program to allow employees to park inexpensively in Township parking structures, thereby creating more on-street parking options for customers.

Longer Term (Beyond 18 months)

5. Advocate for improvements to simplify and expedite permitting and regulatory processes within the Township.
6. Moving forward beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, formalize a monthly or quarterly check-in with the Mayor, Town Manager, Town Attorney (and/or other leaders).
7. Work with the Township (and other public and private partners) to formulate a strategy for incentivizing more recruitment of primary employers.

(8). Organizational Implications

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE & STAFFING

To meet the goals and objectives of the strategic plan, a realignment of existing and new staff is recommended. The refreshed Montclair Center BID organizational structure is organized around four major inter-connected “business centers,” or primary functions within the organization. These business centers are defined as:

- **Clean, Safe & Green**
- **Marketing & Communications**
- **Business Support & Economic Development**
- **Public Space Enhancement & Activation**

These business centers could form the basis for reorganizing the internal operations of the BID. Examples include:

- Align the BID’s organization budget into the preceding categories, including the allocation of all staff time to each function, as opposed all being clustered in the personnel category.
- Align staff functions and job descriptions to preceding categories
- Align board committees to these four functions.

Montclair Center BID Staffing

The staff structure chart below illustrates the relationship between the proposed business center alignment and staff. Existing staff includes the Executive Director, the Operations Manager (managing the Ambassadors and Clean, Safe and Green functions) and the organization’s existing Deputy Director and Marketing and Events Director (housed within Marketing & Communications business center). Two new staff positions are recommended to anchor the new business support function – a Business & Property Support Manager and a Research and Data Manager.



New Positions

Business & Property Support Manager

This new role would be similar to that of a small business liaison. The individual would be responsible for being “in the streets,” trouble-shooting issues for businesses and property owners, and being one of the “faces” of the BID. The manager would contact businesses and property owners regularly, and help businesses and property owners through the permitting process. This position would also play a role in recruitment, which could entail nurturing and establishing relationships with property owners, businesses, and potential business operators.

Research and Data Manager

This position would work closely with the Business & Property Support Manager to maintain data collection about business and property owner stakeholders. A primary responsibility would be keeping track of key metrics (vacancies, lease expirations, etc.), as well as maintaining data about the real estate trends and dynamics in Montclair Center, owners, vacancies, pedestrian counts, etc. Ideally, the candidate for this position would have skills in report design. This position could support other functions within the organization, including developing new tracking systems for Clean, Safe and Green services, and metrics to monitor the success of marketing initiatives.

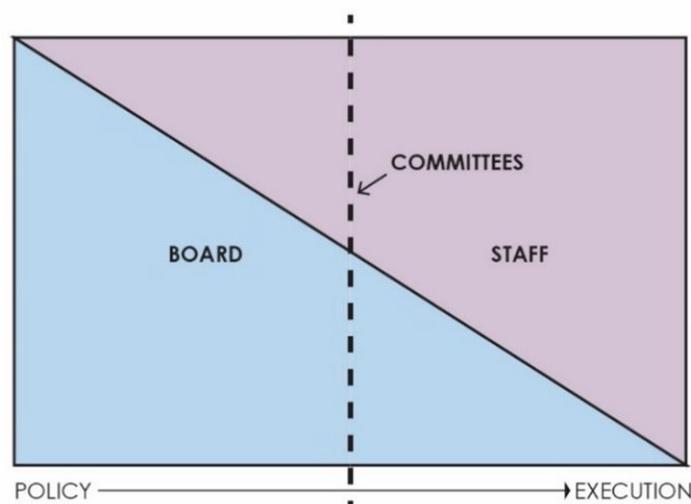
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Montclair Center BID is governed by a board of 21 members, comprised of seven district property owners, seven business owners, two town councilpersons, one resident and four at-large members. The full Board meets nine times a year. Program, administrative, and executive committees meet and work as needed.

Board Roles and Responsibilities

Moving from a Main Street to a more urban district management model will usher in a shift for the role of the Board of Directors. In conventional Main Street programs, the board takes a role in both policy and operations, with expectations that board volunteers will provide hands-on assistance to augment a lean staff and budget to advance programs. In the BID-funded hybrid model, the board role is shifted more to policy, with an expectation that staff will be charged with implementation. A depiction of this relationship is provided below.

BOARD VS. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES



Board Committees – Program

The Montclair Center BID has a full complement of committees that afford the opportunity for board members to get involved in overall district improvement efforts. Several of these committees are standard to the operations of a board (i.e. executive, budget and finance, audit, and nomination). Other committees are more oriented to supporting Montclair Center BID programming. The existing description of program committees follow:

- **Visual Improvements & Streetscape:** Focus on public space enhancements including streetscape/sidewalk safety and beautification, public art and holiday decorations.
- **Marketing & Programming:** Charged with developing the annual events schedule and marketing the district as a whole.
- **Property Owners & Real Estate:** Oversees efforts to attract tenants, support existing tenants, review Town policy issues such as zoning and other ordinances.
- **Parking & Pedestrian Committee:** Solves parking and pedestrian mobility issues within the district.

This strategic plan proposes a reshuffling of existing program committees to be in alignment with refreshed goals and objectives and with the proposed business centers. A brief description of proposed committees and how they relate to existing program committees is provided below:

Proposed Alignment of Committees with Plan Goals	Relationship to Existing Committees
Clean, Safe & Green: Provides input and monitors the implementation of Goal A initiatives	May include members from existing Visual Improvements & Property Owner Committees
Marketing & Communications: Provides input and monitors implementation of Goal B initiatives	Can replace existing Marketing & Programming Committee
Business Support & Economic Development: Provides input and monitors implementation of Goal C initiatives	Can replace existing Property Owner & Real Estate Committee
Public Space Enhancement & Activation: Provides input and monitors implementation of Goal D initiatives	May include members from existing Visual Improvements & Parking/Pedestrian Safety Committees

The preceding program committees should be open for involvement from all stakeholders within the BID, including property and business owners, and any residents within the BID boundaries. By broadening committee membership beyond the board of directors, additional volunteer energy can be captured by the organization. Plus, the program committees should afford leadership development opportunities for district stakeholders, creating a pathway for eventual appointment to the board of directors.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A variety of operational recommendations are suggested in order create systems and practices that are more common with a BID-based urban district management model.

Board Recommendations

- **Term Limits:** It is common for BID boards to have limits on the number of successive terms that a board member may serve. Term limits allow for fresh leadership and maximize the opportunity for stakeholders

to be involved in the organization. A common practice is to allow two successive three-year terms, but then require a year absence before inviting the individual back to the board. Recommend a policy that allows no more than 6 consecutive years serving on the board.

- **Board nominating process:** Board nominations should be made with intention to recruit needed skillsets and meet geographic and demographic representation & diversity.
- **Consolidate budget, finance and audit:** The organization should consider consolidating the budget/finance and audit committees into one.
- **Clarify role of executive committee and relationship to staff:** The current description of the executive committee is too broad as it applies to oversight of staff (i.e. oversight of the Executive Director and their staff). The executive committee should be fully responsible for the performance of the executive director, but it is the executive director's responsibility to manage, select and evaluate all other staff on an ongoing basis. Also, while the executive committee should be able to act on behalf of the board when needed, the notion that the committee "is involved in oversight on nearly every function of the organization" is overstated and should perhaps be removed from the committee description.

Operational Recommendations

- **Budgeting:** Budget adjustments should be considered during mid-year and/or quarterly reviews. For any requested adjustments, the executive director would deliver recommendations to the budget and finance committee who would then make recommendations to executive committee and eventually to the full board. In addition to the programmatic need for the adjustment, long-term implications to the organization's budget and/or resources should be evaluated.
- **Executive Director accountability:** The Executive Director should be guided by a clear job description, expectations and metrics from the Executive Committee. This director has the responsibility to keep the Executive Committee and Board of Directors informed of his/her progress to meet organizational goals and objectives. A monthly reporting format is suggested to provide accountability.
- **Stakeholder communications:** More direct face-to-face relationship building with district stakeholders is recommended from both the staff and the board. Ideas for interaction include a weekly or bi-monthly coffee chat whereby district stakeholders are invited in small groups to discuss general issues with the executive director, a staff member and a board member. Each board member could also be assigned one property or business owner to contact each month, simply to touch base and provide a communications conduit to the BID.
- **Board and staff conflict policy:** The organization's conflict of interest policy should be reviewed and updated as needed to ensure that it is compliant with New Jersey guidelines governing nonprofit and quasi-governmental organizations.

REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION

More than 90% of the operational funding for the Montclair Center BID has historically been drawn from BID assessments. The 2021 Montclair Center Strategic Plan recommends programming that will require the organization to consider a more aggressive approach to both future BID assessments and diversifying organizational revenue beyond the BID.

BID Revenue and Base Level of Services

The evaluation finds that Montclair Center’s BID assessment rates are relatively low and have not historically generated additional revenue as valuations increase and/or new development is added to the property tax rolls. For the past five years (see table below), the effective rate of assessment has ranged from a high 0.192 per \$100 of value in 2017 to a low of 0.164 per \$100 of value in 2018. The current rate of 0.182 per \$100 creates an additional tax of 5.725% to the City of Montclair’s overall property tax rate of 3.179 per \$100. While New Jersey property tax rates are considered high by national standards, the BID assessment burden is considered low. In our experience with BIDs in over 30 states, BID assessments generally range from 5% to 15% of underlying property taxes.

Program Year	Tax Base	BID Budget	Assessment Rate	per \$100
2017	293,613,400	562,300	0.00192	0.192
2018	345,169,300	567,300	0.00164	0.164
2019	349,150,800	627,550	0.00180	0.180
2020	366,141,000	665,760	0.00182	0.182
2021	366,454,100	665,760	0.00182	0.182

2021 BID Assessment per \$3.179 of Montclair property tax rate (2020): 5.725%

BID Budget Increase: To implement and sustain the recommendations from the Strategic Plan, including the creation of the two new Business & Property Owner Support and Research & Data Manager positions, an increase in the BID budget is recommended. For 2022, the BID budget should be increased from \$100,000 to \$150,000 to account for these program changes. In subsequent years, the BID budget should continue to be adjusted to account for increases in costs of living, labor rates and the increased demands for services arising from new development. BID leadership should aim to maintain a budget that produces an assessment rate that ranges from 6.0% to 7.5% of underlying property tax burdens.

Base Level of Services Agreement: The notion of “special benefit” is universal to BIDs and essentially means that assessments do not replace city services, but rather fund enhanced services that would otherwise not be provided by a city. Some of these “enhanced services” are easy to define, such as special promotions and marketing, or enhanced service types such as power washing or deploying uniformed hospitality ambassadors. Other service types are more complicated, such as capital replacement of amenities.

In Montclair, the Township’s base level of services has never been documented. A base level of services agreement, which is a standard practice for BIDs throughout the nation, provides a documented list of services that are the Township’s responsibility regardless of whether the Montclair Center BID exists or not. Through the strategic planning process, the consultant team has provided samples of base level of service agreements from

other BIDs and there has been progress to develop a draft agreement with the Township. The formalization of a base level of service agreement between the BID and the Township is a top recommendation within Goal A: Clean, Safe and Green.

Other Potential Revenue Sources

Grants, Sponsorships/Membership, and Donations: One of the more common ways for downtown management organizations to diversify revenue is through sponsorships, corporate and foundation grants, and individual donations. Sponsorships for memberships are generally offered at tiered rates to accommodate a variety of price points. Sponsorship doesn't have to come solely from downtown businesses; companies outside of downtown may still find value in becoming a member or sponsoring an event that brings visibility to their brand. The ability to raise revenue through event sponsorship has been impacted by social distancing requirements for COVID-19. Moving forward, events that are allowed to take place will be smaller, meaning less exposure and likely fewer sponsors.

Earned Income: There are also ways the Montclair Center BID can diversify revenue through earned income opportunities. Modest revenue could be generated through a downtown banner program or merchandising of items that support the organization. A potentially more significant opportunity would be contracts for service, whereby the BID would negotiate a fee to provide clean and safe services in locations outside its current purview.

Parking Management Fee or Revenue Share: There are a number of precedents for BID-based downtown organizations managing parking within their districts. Examples include Tempe, AZ, Cedar Rapids, IA, Old Pasadena, CA, and Nashville, TN. Stakeholder feedback during the outreach process for this plan revealed that parking is a common concern for Montclair Center employers and customers and there is an opportunity for the BID to play a role in its management and customer experience. The BID could negotiate a management fee or revenue share with the Township for managing on- and off-street parking. This revenue would then be reinvested back into the downtown "parking system" in a variety of ways; most importantly it can be used to significantly enhance downtown's parking experience and destination appeal. This recommendation would require additional conversation and collaboration between the BID and the Township to understand roles and responsibilities and come to a management agreement.

(9). Metrics

METRICS FOR MEASURING SUCCESS

The following matrix offers suggestions for performance metrics for the BID to track moving forward.

Goal A: *Maintain a downtown that is clean, safe, and green*

- Formalize a system to track debris/trash removed, graffiti abated, snow removed, maintenance of planters, trees, amenities, etc.
- Generate monthly summary reports.
- Counts of maintenance/nuisance complaints received from downtown stakeholders

Goal B: *Employ marketing and communications approaches that promote the district and engage all stakeholders*

- Social media following and engagement statistics – track increases month-to-month and year-over-year. (e.g. grow social media followers 5% each year).
- Number of *new* recipients of MCBID communications, and email open rate
- Regular downtown perception surveys of property and business owners, employees, residents, visitors, and others.
- B2B and B2C marketing metrics
- # of press releases per year (at least 12)

Goal C: *Broaden support for existing and new businesses and property owners*

- Formalize a tracking system for key economic and demographic indicators for each downtown sector, including total square footage, absorption, vacancies, rental rates, sales. Highlight these trends in annual “state of downtown” reports.
- Develop an internal tracking system to better capture business and property data – e.g., business type, leasing, availability
- Continue to track the number of business openings and closings per year
- Frequency of “touchpoints” with downtown businesses – i.e., number of site visits by staff and board members to downtown businesses
- Number of MCBID-led promotions for downtown businesses
- Number of temporary storefront activations

Goal D: *Enhance and create public spaces to provide enjoyable experiences throughout downtown*

- Count of art installations – permanent and temporary
- Count of small-scale programming and activations
- Downtown activity metrics – i.e., pedestrian, bicycle, and auto counts; parking utilization rates

Goal E *Work with the Township and other partners to be an effective advocate for the district*

- Formalization of quarterly meetings with Township leadership

Appendix

- A. Previous Plan Recommendations
- B. Market Snapshot
- C. Outreach Summary
- D. Survey Summary

A. PREVIOUS PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Montclair SAFE: Complete Streets Implementation Plan 2017

According to the 2017 township-wide SAFE (“*Streets Are For Everyone*”) Plan, transportation corridors that should be given priority when funds for improvements are allocated include:

- Mountain Ave.
- Orange Rd./Bell St
- Hillsdale Ave./Church St./Glenridge
- *Note that Bloomfield Avenue was excluded from this study due to other ongoing efforts along that road.*
- S. Fullerton Ave
- Elm St./Grove St.
- Maple Ave./Pine S

Recommended pedestrian improvements to each of these streets

The recommendations are categorized improvements into treatments that can be applied to roadway segments, all intersections or signalized intersections. The “SAFE Plan” provides detailed information on typical applications, concept designs, and photos showing local and regional examples.

Roadway Segment Improvements

- Sidewalks and Curb Ramps
- Pedestrian-Scale Lighting
- Parklets
- Mid-block crossings
- Gateways

All Intersection improvements

- Crosswalks
- Mini-traffic circles
- Curb Extensions
- Pedestrian refuge islands
- RRFB (Flashing warning lights)
- In-Street Crossing Sign

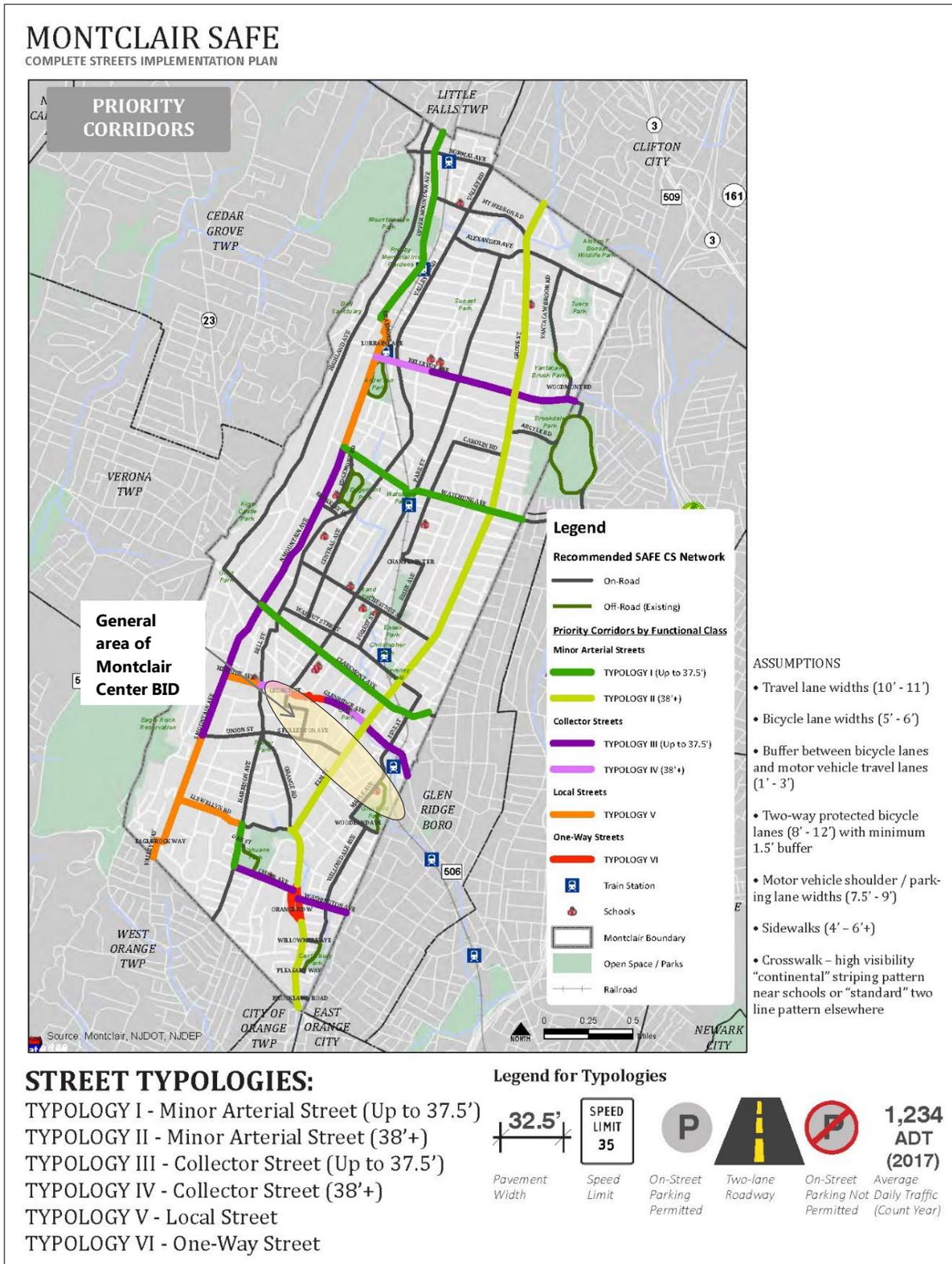
Signalized Intersection Improvements (in addition to the above)

- Pedestrian Countdown Signals

Recommended bicycle facility improvements categorized by street typology* include:

- Conventional Bicycle Lanes
- Buffered Bicycle Lanes
- Two-way protected bicycle lanes
- Contraflow Bicycle Lanes
- Bicycle Boulevard
- Advisory Bicycle Lanes
- Sharrows or Shared Lane Markings
- Shared Use Path

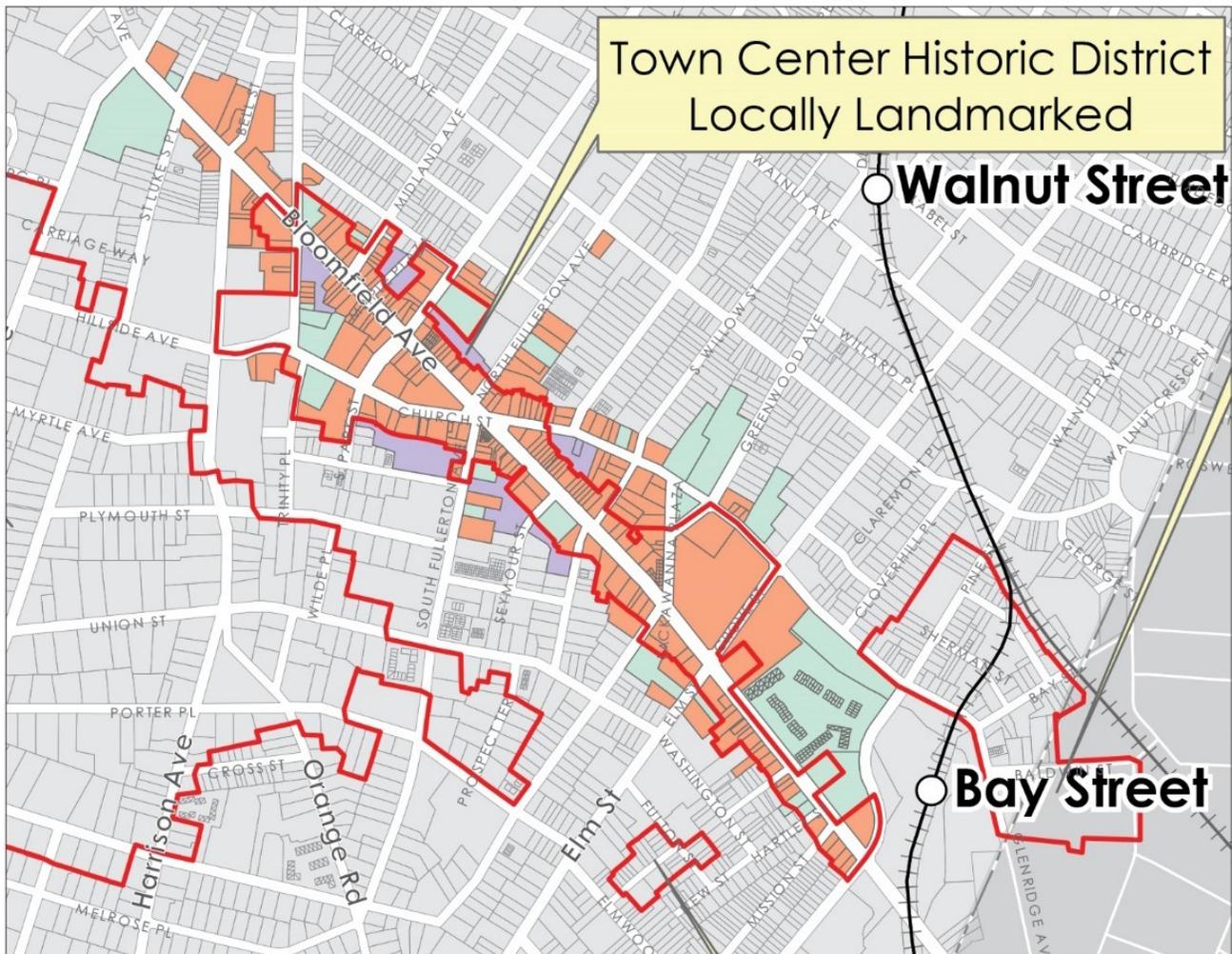
The map below describes the street typologies and illustrates the priority corridors identified in the plan:



Montclair Township Unified Land Use + Circulation Element May 2015 (Amended December 2020) ([plan link](#))

To fulfill the community's vision, and accomplish the goals and objectives, a Unified Land Use and Circulation Plan was prepared to meet the needs of future residents of Montclair. The purpose of linking land use and circulation recommendations together was to ensure that future growth and development in the Township is met with supportive infrastructural improvements, and vice versa. The process of preparing this plan fully engaged the community and raised awareness of the many planning issues impacting Montclair Township.

- The district contains an eclectic mix of distinctive late 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture and has been designated as a local historic district since 2002.
- The Montclair Historic Preservation Commission works closely with property owners and businesses to ensure that changes to the buildings in the district maintain the historic integrity of the area. Many *pros and cons of this have been brought up by property owners*
- The Bloomfield Avenue corridor contains several sub districts, each defined by distinctive characteristics and land uses. These sub districts, moving from east to west, include the Transit Village district, Lackawanna Plaza district, Arts and Entertainment district and Western Gateway district.

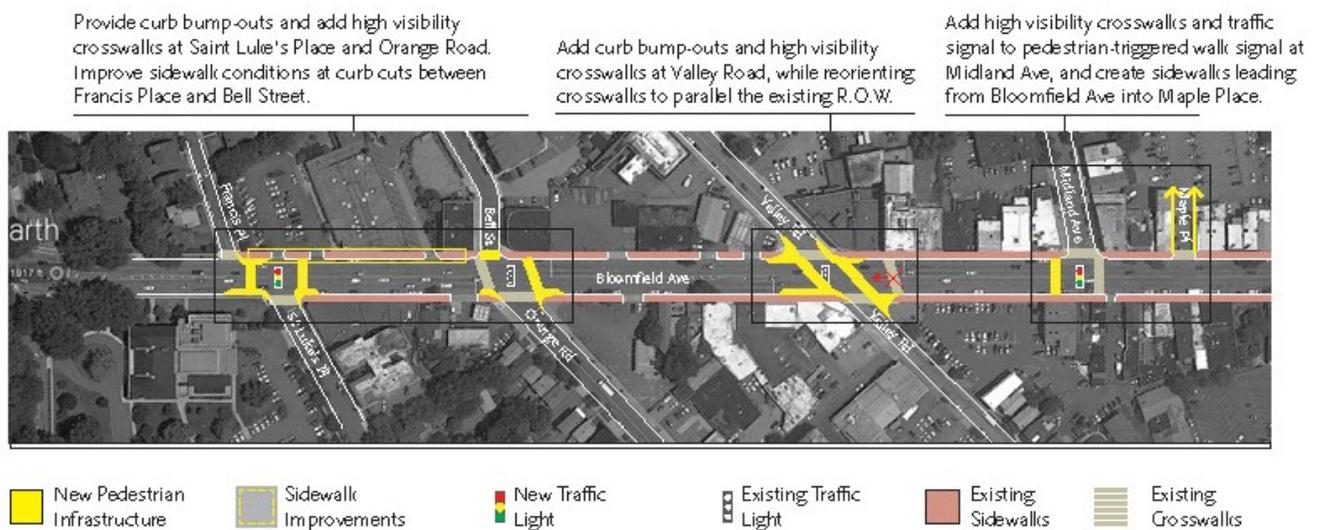


Issues and Opportunities identified in this plan and the 2021 Montclair BID Strategic Plan Process

- The Fullerton Parking Garage does not feel safe.
- Bloomfield Avenue is not safe for pedestrians to cross, and doesn't have an adequate and appropriate sidewalk width throughout the length of the BID.
- The Bloomfield Avenue corridor does not provide adequate pedestrian and bicycle connections both internally to the corridor and to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Many destinations in Montclair Center are not conveniently accessed by public transit.
- Significant gaps exist in Bloomfield Avenue around Lackawanna Plaza and Bay Street.
- There are too many vacancies along Bloomfield Avenue, particularly in larger commercial spaces.
- The size of the Montclair Center BID is not large enough to reflect a growing commercial district surrounding Bloomfield Avenue.
- Poor pedestrian and bicycle connections to Bay Street Station.
- The bus system is difficult to understand.
- In addition to being an impediment to development, parking resources are often strained at peak times, especially on weekend evenings.
- Montclair parking ratios correspond to those typically used for suburban development.
- Physical building deterioration is an issue, and there are several highly visible underutilized properties that continue to negatively impact Montclair Center.
- There is a need for more effective development of certain parcels of land within the Town Center, especially in the areas east of Grove Street and off Bloomfield Avenue.
- Marginally used parking lots and deteriorated and predominantly vacant buildings could be more actively used in ways that support Montclair Center developments.
- Zoning does not reflect the vision of the community: under the existing zoning, the core of the Montclair Center area falls under the C1 Zone which is a commercial district that allows for mixed-use development at a maximum density of 55 units/acre and a maximum height of six stories. Despite the fact that this zoning has been in place for over 80 years, there is only one building on Bloomfield Avenue, outside of recent redevelopment areas, that is six stories tall.
- For Montclair Center to thrive, grow, and evolve with changing lifestyles and needs, the Township must address mobility needs including efforts to strengthen options independent of the automobile, implement a variety of parking strategies, create a comprehensive pedestrian improvement plan, adopt and implement a bicycle plan, design improved connections to the Bay Street Station through pedestrian and bicycle amenities, and improve public transportation services.
- Montclair Center is envisioned to evolve as an attractive downtown destination in the region, with a blend of commercial uses and housing types, a dense pedestrian-friendly core and superior transit access.
- Additionally, a new shuttle route is envisioned as a way to link Bloomfield Avenue, Bay Street Station, Valley-Van Vleck, and Walnut Street Station into a comprehensive local-serving transit network that compliments the existing shuttle through the South End.
- It is recommended that a new circulator jitney shuttle be created to better connect the major transit/commercial nodes to Montclair Center. The recommended route prioritizes moving people up and down Bloomfield Avenue and reinforcing Bay Street Station as the principal transit stop in the area.
- Create a new Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan to support the revitalization efforts for the Lackawanna Plaza area: key to the plan is a new state-of-the-art supermarket. Other objectives include providing a mix of uses, including residential, to reinforce this section of Bloomfield Avenue as a place to live, work and play.

- Create a new Montclair Center Western Gateway: bordered by Park Street to the east and Orange Road to the west and includes the Township’s largest mixed-use redevelopment projects. The western end of the district is established by a Whole Foods food store and the Public Service building, which formerly contained the Luna Stage and has been expanded for retail and office uses.
- An important objective for the downtown district is to encourage continued investment in its buildings, while maintaining the historic character and scale of the area. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings is encouraged.
- New development should contribute to consistent street facades along Bloomfield Avenue, while not drastically changing the character of well-established commercial corridors.
- Based on future development designed to activate the street, similar improvements to those identified for Bloomfield Avenue should be applied to Glenridge Avenue, including a complete network of crosswalks and sidewalks. Specifically, the intersection of Glenridge Avenue and Grove Street should be treated with high visibility crosswalks and curb extensions to improve the safety and walking experience for pedestrians crossing this intersection.
- Create an enhanced bus stop near Park Street and Bloomfield Avenue
- Bloomfield Avenue Conceptual Pedestrian Improvements
 - Add crosswalks to all approaches at signalized intersections
 - Signalize intersections that are 500 feet or more from a crossing, especially within the Bloomfield Avenue shopping core
 - Install bulb-outs to reduce crossing distances for pedestrians and reduce speeds of turning vehicles
 - High visibility crosswalks should be installed at intersections that have a high mix of turning vehicles and pedestrians crossing the street.
 - Reduce curbcuts that interrupt pedestrian facilities by creating breaks in the sidewalk and adding vehicle-pedestrian conflict locations.

Figure 3.1.f: Bloomfield Avenue Conceptual Pedestrian Improvements



NOTE: The illustration above is meant to provide conceptual ideas for improvements consistent with the community's vision for the Bloomfield Avenue corridor, and would require further study to determine feasibility.

Bloomfield Avenue Complete Corridor Plan 2015 ([link](#))

The Bloomfield Avenue Complete Corridor Plan was a collaborative effort with significant community participation to pursue the creation of design standards and recommendations for a 4.5 mile long, multi-modal transportation corridor in Essex County. The purpose of the project was to develop a Complete Corridor Plan, that addresses the unique characteristics of this segment of Bloomfield Avenue; which traverses several traditional downtown districts, and carries significant volumes of local and regional traffic, serving average traffic volumes of 18,000 to just over 25,000 vehicles per day.

One of the biggest concerns identified in the background research and community outreach for the Corridor is speeding traffic. Whether due to the roadway's physical design, intersection configuration, or signal timing, the community is concerned with lack of speed enforcement. The posted speed limit for almost the entire corridor is 25mph, but actual speeds are typically much higher. This poses a major safety concern for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and transit users. Other concerns include inefficient and confusing intersection operations – particularly where more than two streets intersect, and congestion related to on-street parking and turning movements.

Major recommendations for the Montclair Center District that are consistent with stakeholder outreach for this strategic plan are:

- Major improvements to the intersection of Bloomfield Avenue and North & South Fullerton Avenue/Glenridge Avenue/Church Street and Valley Road
 - General pedestrian, bicycle, and traffic calming recommendations include: upgraded crosswalks and signalization; improved streetscape and street trees in transitional areas; additional pedestrian-scaled lighting; curb cut consolidation/access management; bike parking areas; and traffic calming interventions, such as curb bump outs, medians, and textured intersections.
 - Strategies for these specific intersections identified as prototypes include: pedestrian-activated lighted crosswalks, increased pedestrian crossing timing/signalization, textured intersections, curb bump outs, demarcated bus loading areas, ergonomic crosswalks (flared crosswalks following pedestrians desired paths), pedestrian shelter islands, and protective bollards.
- Some of the key transit recommendations include: improving bus stops and bus information, enforcing parking regulations at bus stops, and providing pull-offs and marked bus loading areas.
- The "Six Points" intersection in Montclair Center has plans for traffic calming and intersection adjustments in for final approvals.

B. MARKET SECTORS OVERVIEW

Employment

Montclair Township's largest employment sector is in the broad category of services (nearly 60% of jobs are service-related, which includes everything from health services to legal services, but not retail or dining). Another 11% of jobs are in finance, insurance, and real estate. 7.5% of Montclair's workforce is employed in the restaurant industry. Another 8% work in retail establishments. 7% of jobs are in professional, scientific and tech fields.⁴

By far, the largest concentration of jobs in Montclair are located in (or adjacent to) Montclair Center. Since 2010, Montclair has maintained a job base of around 19,000 jobs,⁵ a few thousand less than estimates throughout the early 2000s. Only 10% of the pre-COVID employment base lives *and* works in Montclair.⁶ Among Montclair residents commuting outside of town for work, most are traveling to New York or Newark (30%), with the rest to other towns in northern New Jersey.

Office Inventory

Although leasing activity has slowed or stalled for the better part of 2020,⁷ there is still evidence of demand for office space which will continue throughout the recovery period. Much of Montclair Center's office inventory is in upper floor commercial buildings.⁸ The District also has a few "harder to lease due to floorplan" properties, like the former Chase Bank property. Large-scale developments will add significantly more office space to the District in the next few years. Approximately 28,000 square feet of new office (with an emphasis on medical office space) is slated to come online in 2021 as part of the Seymore Street project.⁹ Office leasing rates range from \$27-\$35 per square foot – a few dollars per square foot lower, on average, than a few years earlier, due to COVID. Overall, rates are higher than other parts of the I-280 corridor, but not quite as high as Northern New Jersey sub-markets closer to New York.¹⁰

Retail / Restaurants / Storefront Vitality

Dining Scene as a Key Economic Driver

Montclair Center is a renowned dining destination, with restaurants like Cuban Pete's, Raymond's, and Salute attracting visitors from across the New York metro region. Church Street is a particularly popular draw – due in large part to the pedestrian-friendly nature of the street. A handful of restaurants have closed permanently due to COVID (Montclair Social Club, Costanera, etc.). Storefront (retail and restaurant) turnover and vacancy has been *relatively* high in recent years, even before the COVID crisis.¹¹

Retail Vulnerabilities

While restaurants are the clear driver of visitor activity, there is less certainty around retail. Overall, Montclair Center benefits from a healthy balance of national chains and local businesses. A few long-standing establishments are going out of businesses (mostly due to retirement and less to do with economic conditions).

⁴ 2020 Infogroup, Inc. – NAICS

⁵ Onthemap, 2018 data; and <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view>

⁶ Onthemap.com – 2018 estimates

⁷ Newmark Knight Frank, 2Q 2020 Northern New Jersey Office Market – COVID essentially stalled office leasing activity in 2020.

⁸ Based on review of commercial real estate resources (LoopNet) and stakeholder interviews

⁹ <https://www.montclairlocal.news/2020/11/27/seymour-street-project-set-to-open-this-winter/>

¹⁰ Avg. asking rent Q1 2020 for the 1-280 corridor was \$25, according to the Colliers New Jersey Office Report.

¹¹ Stakeholder feedback

However, a greater number of established businesses have no plans of leaving – yet should still be supported to ensure their viability.

- There is some concern that too many independent retailers will be supplanted by national chains.
- There is a significant supply of new ground-floor retail space coming online, particularly along lower and mid Bloomfield Avenue, which may be a challenge to fill. The Seymore Street development alone will include 30K square feet of new retail space, some but not all of which has been leased.¹²
- Bloomfield Avenue has several “challenging” areas for retail – especially in the 4th Ward where gaps in the physical fabric as well as perceptions about safety have led to some instability.
- There is a sense among stakeholders that the business types could be diversified throughout the District.
- A disproportionate amount of the restaurant and retail offerings are perceived to be too “high-end” and unaffordable to locals. There are over half a million people living within a 5-mile radius of Montclair Center,¹³ with significant disposable incomes, but the BID should work to ensure that there are offerings for locals with lower and moderate household incomes.

Leakage

For a town of its size, Montclair has a high concentration of retail and restaurant uses. Yet there is still evidence of leakage (supply not quite meeting demand) in many retail segments. Within a 1-mile radius of Montclair Center, the retail categories¹⁴ with the most leakage are general merchandise stores, building supply stores, and grocery stores. Surprisingly, there is actually slight leakage in the restaurants and eating and drinking establishments category (around \$11M annually). The general merchandise category is leaking \$57 million annually – something to consider as more residents move downtown and will require basic convenience goods. The demand for grocery retail will likely be addressed through the Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment, slated to be anchored by a grocery retailer.¹⁵

COVID Implications for Retail

While some retail formats will never fully recover – particularly in the shopping mall space -- most retail is predicted to bounce back in small and mid-sized downtowns that offer independent, unique retail experiences. Downtowns that are mindful of the needs of independent retailers will be best positioned. For example, boutique start-up businesses may require smaller, subdivided floorplans.¹⁶

Housing

According to Zillow estimates,¹⁷ home values have increased almost 10% between 2019 and 2020, and are predicated to increase by at least that rate over the next year.¹⁸ Sales prices jumped 29%.¹⁹ Overall, the rental market was relatively stable throughout the pandemic. Demand for rental units continued to be high, especially among 20–30-year-old professionals seeking urban lifestyle amenities.²⁰

¹² According to developer interview December 2020

¹³ ESRI BAO estimates. 5 miles from chosen location “470 Bloomfield Ave.” – 578,256 people, 214,168 households

¹⁴ Significant leakage of motor vehicle sales and service (but not something they’d want to attract to MC necessarily); and gas stations. Other top leakage categories include lawn & garden and building supply stores (leaking \$28M annually).

¹⁵ <https://baristanet.com/2021/02/montclair-new-jersey-lackawanna-plaza-owner-announces-fresh-vision-and-grocery-store-to-long-vacant-space/>

¹⁶ One of the BID’s most successful businesses is located in 300 sf. Storefront

¹⁷ Only includes the “middle price tier” in the calculation. Seasonally adjusted. The typical home value in Montclair was \$769K

¹⁸ Could increase 11.7% over the next year.

¹⁹ Between September 2019 and November 2020

²⁰ Based on stakeholder interviews, Dec. 2020

Several multi-family residential buildings have come online in the past two years, throughout the district, including the 53-unit Montclairion and the 46-unit, partially open Vestry Apartments located near the transit station.²¹ The Montclair Center Gateway Project – featuring the MC Hotel – also includes 200+ new housing units. There are a handful of smaller scale projects with new upper floor dwelling units along Willow Street that have been recently developed. Hundreds of new housing units are currently under construction or in the approval process. The Seymour Street project will include 200 new units (first residential phase slated to open mid- 2021).²² A proposed development for the former Hahne’s parking lot will feature 74 new apartment units.²³

Lodging / Tourism / Arts & Cultural Amenities

Lodging

The 228-room MC Hotel opened in August 2019 at the corner of Bloomfield and Orange.²⁴ The MC Hotel was thriving pre-pandemic – and while it has struggled due to COVID, there’s optimism of a strong recovery, especially with a commitment to strict health and hygiene protocols moving forward.²⁵ The hotel’s outdoor rooftop bar, with views of New York, is an attraction in and of itself. The facility includes 8,000 square feet of conference, meeting, and event space.

Art and Cultural Amenities

Montclair Center has a wide range of art, music, and cultural venues and businesses. The BID and a slew of other organizations host a variety of events annually that attract both locals and visitors. While the last of Montclair’s three original movie theaters has closed, there is potential to recruit a non-profit institution to take over programming. There are several smaller-scale performing arts venues, including a new theater company at Bloomfield & Hartley. The Seymore Street development will include 10,000 square feet of arts-oriented uses, including arts education, gallery space, and artist studios. Part of the project’s goal is to create a mini arts and entertainment district.²⁶ It will feature an outdoor plaza for events and serve as gateway to the Wellmont Theater, a renovated, historic, 2,500 capacity music venue.

Demographics: General Characteristics & Observations

- With a population just over 39,000, Montclair is the sixth largest municipality in Essex County.
- The “main” part of the BID (census tract 168/Ward 3) is wealthier, whiter, and more educated than the two other census tracts (located in Ward 4). The census tracts in Ward 4 have lower median household incomes (\$59K-\$70K versus \$82K in census tract 168).
- The average household size is significantly lower in the “main” census tract (1.84) compared to the SW corner census tract in Ward 4 (2.83).
- The percentage of owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units doesn’t vary that much across the census tracts. There is more home ownership in the lower-income tract.
- The lower-income tract has a higher median home value (\$392K) than the “main” BID tract (\$364K). This is an indication that gentrification pressures are very high for Ward 4.

²¹ 1-bedroom apartments start at \$2,500/month at The Vestry.

²² 2018 development map; developer interview (Dennis Giuliano)

²³ <https://www.montclairlocal.news/2020/10/17/hahnes-plans-detailed-for-74-apartments-on-church-street/> - 10% affordable units

²⁴ The other hotel is the George (which caters to the higher-end resort seeker). 34 room hotel opened (Mountain Ave.??) according to 2018 development map??

²⁵ <https://njbiz.com/new-rules-new-solutions/>

²⁶ <https://www.montclairlocal.news/2020/11/27/seymour-street-project-set-to-open-this-winter/>

Census Tracts	...168	...167	...171	MC Township Total	
	(Main BID)	SE corner	SW corner	2020	2010
Median HH income	\$82,530	\$70,729	\$59,754	\$121,126	not avail.
Total Population	3,857	2,358	2,382	39,122	37,669
White Alone	53.2%	33.5%	12.6%	58.0%	62.2%
Black Alone	31.4%	48.8%	72.2%	28.3%	27.2%
Asian Alone	0.2%	5.1%	2.1%	5.0%	3.8%
Hispanic Origin	13.1%	16.9%	19.9%	10.3%	7.5%
Median Age	38.7	37.5	36	41.3	39.9
Bachelor's or Higher	67.8%	61.1%	32.1%	73.2%	not avail.
Avg. Household Size	1.84	1.88	2.83	2.47	2.47
Owner Occ.	20.9%	19.0%	26.8%	52.6%	54.1%
Renter Occ.	73.4%	66.8%	64.6%	42.2%	40.7%
Vacant	5.8%	14.2%	8.6%	5.2%	5.2%
Median Home Value	\$364K	\$360K	\$392K	\$675K	not avail.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst 2020 forecasts

The “two sides of Montclair” (disparity) is further contextualized by the top 3 “Tapestry Segments” (Esri Business Analyst) within a 1-mile radius. **The first two Tapestry Segments are a rather stark contrast to the third.**

<p>Trendsetters: “educated young singles who aren’t ready to settle down.” This demographic tends to live alone in upscale, multi-unit structures. They have higher incomes with little financial responsibility...they travel often, are fashionable, and are socially and environmentally conscious.</p>
<p>Urban Chic: “professionals that live a sophisticated, exclusive lifestyle.” They tend to be married couple households that are well-educated and financially stable, single-family homeowners, a bit older. Tech-savvy, environmentally aware, white collar. They live in the suburban periphery of large metro areas.</p>
<p>City Strivers: Younger renters (blend of family households, and single parents) in densely populated neighborhoods with lower household incomes – mostly foreign-born. “to support their lifestyle, City Strivers commute long distances to find work in the service, healthcare, or retail industry.</p>

C. OUTREACH SUMMARY

Between October 2020 and March 2021 P.U.M.A. conducted 55 virtual stakeholder interviews to discuss downtown’s strengths, challenges, and desired improvements for both downtown and the Montclair Center BID as an organization. The interviews represented diverse interests and perspectives, including property owners, small business owners, developers, residents, Montclair Township staff, current and former BID board members, county and township elected officials, community organizations, representatives of event venues, and hotels. Overarching themes from this stakeholder outreach are documented below.

Top 3 Priorities for BID (# of times mentioned)

Be more proactive in promoting desired types of development and fill vacancies (i.e., mixed-use, housing, office, hotel) (10)
Identify successful areas (i.e. Church St.) that can translate to others – rebalance the neglected parts of the district and make improvements– both east and west ends (8)
Communicate better with business owners about what is going on in town as well as BID meetings to participate in (8)
Enhance the outdoor experience, program existing public spaces and identify new public space opportunities (Seymore Plaza/Lackawanna will help) (7)
The BID and Township should be a major player to market the arts community as a regional destination (5)
BID should be a better voice for the community/landlords/business (4)
Ensure that an affordable grocery store is implemented in Lackawanna Plaza - Township and BID should work together on this (4)
Continue to assist/promote with large community gatherings/events (i.e., Film Festival) (3)
Need a creative marketing strategy that can adapt to today’s market and technology –new ideas (2)
Create “subdistricts” within the BID boundaries – it’s a large geographical area that has many unique differences (2)
Identify how a BID board should function – what does board do vs. staff, rewrite by-laws, board members and executive committee need proper training (2)
Improve the township relationship – must work together (2)
Need to support the small businesses and spread out the activity “like it used to be”
BID should be more high-level visionary and strategic
Need more property owner involvement (create a committee of commercial real estate owners)
Need a master plan around people visiting Montclair – how to keep people in downtown app/technology led by the BID board – what to do? events, businesses
Security – need more cameras
Need more transparency to property and business owners and community at large

Top 3 Priorities for District (# of times mentioned)

Bloomfield Avenue improvements –safety, crossings, (mid-block) streetscape, make a pleasant and walkable experience, calm the traffic (implement the SAFE streets initiative (25)
Improve the parking experience (supply, management, wayfinding signage) (make sure meters works and rules are clearly identified, expand short-term parking (i.e.,15-30min and provide for free) (15)
Walkability/pedestrian friendly for all abilities (seniors, wheel chairs), streetscape improvements, lighting, improve bike/walk routes to the core area from east to west, more bike rack (i.e., to/from Church St. area) (10)

Improve the aesthetics – streetscape, building facades (7)
Create a permanent public plaza/additional outdoor space/dining option, expand parklets (7)
Need more shops for daily needs: butcher, cheese shop, modern food court (6)
Improve the music scene – not enough variety or small venues (Wellmont Theater is great but it holds 2,000 – need venues in the 200 -400 range) (5)
The BID and Township should be a major player to market the arts community as a regional destination (5)
Better coordinate events/festivals with retailers/restaurants so everyone knows about them and they do not overlap dates (like sidewalk sales, film festival, Urban Adventure, car shows, etc.) (4)
Assessment of the type of stores we have – how to attract more people to “linger” – the proper mix/diversity of retail, be more deliberate in the type of businesses desired (4)
Better link to train stations (sidewalk and signage improvements, potential circulator bus) (4)
Implement design to make Church St. a festival street that can easily be temporarily closed for events (3)
Assistance to new businesses that may not survive COVID-19 (3)
Township needs to be creative about zoning, simplify the building permit process, make it easier for retailers to be on Bloomfield Ave, remove subjectivity from regulations (2)
Better address and support the homeless population
Address the truck loading/unloading issues on Bloomfield Ave. (curbside management)
Need a family-oriented attraction, particularly in the east part of town – increase diversity – not enough African Americans using downtown as well as younger people
Improve the disconnection between different shopping areas on the south/east end – identity needs to be based in community – local business, i.e., Montclair Brewery
Keep it diverse and funky, (local) people and “the stuff” intergenerational piece
A validation parking system that businesses pay for customers to parking in structures
Sustainability
Affordability for housing and business
Signage for retailers – let landlords/owners make the design decisions some can have bigger – review the aesthetics – (get rid of subjectivity)
Provided a banner across Bloomfield Ave that advertises events, seasonal and regular

District Strengths/Weaknesses (# of times mentioned)

Strengths	Weaknesses/challenges
Restaurants – regional destination (24)	Bloomfield Avenue – traffic, divides the district/physical barrier, not pedestrian friendly, crossing challenging, not enough sidewalk activation (24)
Church Street improvements, great infrastructure (15)	Vacancy issues/high turnover for restaurants/commercial space (not just COVID related)(17)
Walkability (15)	Not enough parking, need more designated employee/office parking (17)
Plenty of parking supply - just need to better manage (the new parking structure(s) will help – shared parking philosophy works well (13)	Need additional office/primary employment (all sizes, large, small, shared, sole proprietor) (13)
Variety of locally owned boutique shops (11)	Unaffordability – losing diversity/too upscale, restaurants unaffordable for daily local patrons, losing its identity, displacement and gentrification (keep the east area “gritty” (13)
Mixed-use vibrancy (10)	Better connect to the east end, – future connections to Seymore St. and Lackawanna Plaza (11)
Strong community, customer loyalty (shop local mentality) (10)	Zoning and code issues - need to relax, township and design review board is inconsistent and rigid, “historic” regulations <i>(Even small façade and signage upgrades require a cumbersome review process, ground floor use requirements rigid)</i> also challenging regulations during COVID-19 (i.e., outdoor seating) (10)
Build on Montclair Art Museum and other art related destinations as a regional cultural destination (8)	Better connect train stations – walk & bike (8)
Future Lackawanna Plaza improvements (8)	Need to improve lighting, tree canopy/variety, streetscape, banners, could have banners for multiples events/destinations (7)
Great train/bus service to Manhattan (7)	Township (especially Engineering & Public Works) is not visionary (6)
Historic architecture, great buildings (7)	Parking – “we” spend way too much time talking about parking – it is not a problem (buck all national trends) (6)
Future Seymore Street Arts District (6)	A reputation for only supporting certain kinds of businesses – need to represent all business - when more office comes online, they need to embrace the office spaces (6)
New Hotel is good draw for new clientele (4)	Many side streets are neglected and not attractive, many “gaps” in street frontage, need more flowers/trees (5)
Future greenway/rail trail proposed (Essex-Hudson Greenway) that will connect Hoboken and Montclair is a huge opportunity (4)	Need a better balance of retail and restaurants (not enough retail) (5)

Existing parklets are great (3)	Not very cycling friendly, improve the network, add bike racks in front of more businesses (5)
Major renovations/redevelopment is good for downtown – turned large parking lot into ped friendly district (3) (<i>Brookfield Place is good example of newdevelopment</i>)	Need nightlife, dancing/clubs – town is “dark” after 10pm (5)
Lot of disposable income, but not pretentious (2)	Better address homeless/transient issues (4)
The town is almost recession proof – has not gone backwards (2)	Better manage curb space – delivery, pickup, ride share, etc.) (4)
Perfect blend of city and suburb	The township should help support the arts financially and better market the arts outside of Montclair (4)
Banners on light posts are good for promoting events	Need to better marketing the district/township to the region and neighboring communities (4)
Strong design guidelines and design review to maintain historic character of the district	No great gathering space for larger events (4)
Eclectic variety of housing	Lack of wayfinding signage and information, i.e., kiosks (3)
Cyclist friendly (Tour de Montclair, other cycling events)	Make sure the Lackawanna plaza design has good civic space (3)
Montclair adopted the 1 st Complete Streets policies in NJ	Work on getting people to walk further and check out other things besides their primary destinations (2)
West end of district is stronger	The township is late to the COVID response (2)
Popular alternative to living in Manhattan	Need to provide more affordable and market rate housing (2)
Proposed new traffic signals on Bloomfield Ave and mid-block crosswalk with signal at Seymore St. will greatly improve the district	Fullerton parking structure is a horrible experience (needs to be revamped) (2)
	Political issue/divide of being in 2 wards – Ward 3 is more affluent than 4 th ward
	Need to rebrand the township – new logo
	Not clear who is supposed to maintain what (Township vs. BID)
	Some great historic buildings are challenging to redevelop due to size/footprint (i.e., Old Chase Bank building)
	Need public restrooms
	Heavy union issue – most township employees are unionized
	Township makes too many compromises for parking
	Lack of trust with township staff
	Need additional financing tools
	The way people talk to and about each other
	Renters are invisible to homeowners
	Township has a small staff
	Lack of parking for people with disabilities

	School district is dysfunctional
	Development could be better – better quality buildings and open space
	Lot of corruption – weird/bad politics, Not a well-run town
	Lack of design consistency in the district
	Too much concurrent construction - disruptive
	Town manager does not have a nuanced approach
	Need bike share
	Need drinking fountains/water filling stations
	Provide walking tour guide – arts, history, architecture
	Parking structures need better lighting
	Too many hair & nail salons
	Township needs to better understand the importance of downtown – they need to be a better partner with all 6 BIDs

BID Strength/Weaknesses (# of times mentioned)

Strengths	Weaknesses/challenges
Providing day to day cleaning/maintenance services, snow removal (33)	BID should be a player in the economic development/attracting businesses, work on the mix of businesses (13)
Event support: film, literary festival, cultural events, known as a creative district (14)	Need to diversify marketing, rebranding (most is on social media) need to reach out beyond Montclair, not very well known by the community -more regional, advertise hotels (also better track where visitors are coming from) (11)
Communication and social media (13)	Leadership turn-over, instability - 4 EDs in 5 years (10)
BID has been at education stores during COVID – PPP loans, grants, etc. (7)	Need to be more visionary (and consistent) and creative for the long term, too “in the weeds” (9)
	Need to work better with the township, not against, need to better understand politics (9)
Build on their assets – Montclair film, arts & culture, artwork/murals (7)	Need more representation for residents, particularly renters and better communicate the value of the BID to residents, small and new businesses (8)
Support for the arts (5)	Events and improvements focused too much around the core (Bloomfield & Church St.) – expand to other areas of the district (8)
Good at coordinating with local businesses (5)	Building owners have a different agenda than tenants, need to reach out more to property owners/landlords (8)
Promotion of entertainment and events (4)	
Operates professionally and legally (4)	Consistency of messaging, implement better organization/communication for the committees so members do not have to sift through so many e-mails (6)
Good at being creative (4)	BID Board does not always understand their role, too big – need to identify their role vs. staff – The strategic plan will hopefully define roles (5)

Great that the director and board saw the need to conduct this plan (3)	East end businesses are not well represented on the Board – large Hispanic population that is not represented, get the surrounding business involved more involved (4)
This BID is “above average” compared to other BIDs – many NJ BIDs follow their lead (2)	Need to highlight/better advertise for the “non-successful” business – business that are doing well do not need as much assistance (4)
Parklets are successful (2)	Coordinate better with other Montclair BIDs and with NYC BIDS, strategic partnerships (4)
Great support by the municipality – best shape in 40-50 years	Design advocacy should be housed in the BID (4)
Attracts passionate people/directors	Board meetings have been characterized by a lot of talk and not enough action/decisions (3)
Good at acknowledging leaders	Vital board members are running businesses so they don’t have enough time to get work done (3)
Restaurant support	Board can be intimidating – full of wealthy people (they do mean well) Need to “clean house” with board members (2)
Embraces walkability – strong advocates for the downtown and complete streets	Executive committee needs to be more transparent (2)
Diverse group – good ratio of women	Not in sync with township – not willing to bend rules, too rigid, sometimes not realistic (2)
	A lot of cliques – many sole proprietors that don’t like corporate structure – expertise is not in running a BID (2)
	BID Board is too big – 21 members makes it hard to get a quorum
	The board needs to make sure the ED has the resources he/she needs to do their job better
	Need more assistance from BID for annual parade for African American Heritage Foundation Annual pledge in June– big parade/festival (need to help on south end)
	BID should encourage stores to stay open later, or at least leave lights on after 9pm
	Need a better “buy local” campaign
	Get more creative with outreach themes (don’t just repost what individual stores post)
	BID could work with property owners to better activate existing public spaces (such as new hotel space)
	Should have a walking tour by ambassadors to do a survey of need in BID – vacancies, lighting, then use the list
	The Bylaws need to break from the Main Street model
	The ED needs to manage the staff, not worry about day-to-day operations
	Ambassadors should be the eyes and ears of downtown – identify issues like sidewalk repairs
	Need more holiday decorations
	Would like an annual report on where their assessment money goes (qualitative and quantitative)
	Managing expectations for its members

	BID should facilitate events and not lead events
	Coordinate with universities and non-profits
	Need a directory of businesses with a point of contact for each
	Bring back the "Montclair Monday" business owner forum https://www.designshed.org/post/montclair-mondays
	Better connect new residents/housing to walk downtown
	Need to think about how improvements can benefit historically disadvantaged people
	BID could assist commercial businesses with coordination of trash pickup/consistent vendors

D. SURVEY SUMMARY

An online survey was developed to help identify priorities and improvements for Montclair Center BID over the immediate term and the next five years (and beyond). Findings from the survey will inform the Montclair Center BID Strategic Plan (2021). The survey ran from mid-February to late March 2021, and resulted in a total of **973 respondents**. The survey took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, as business restrictions were gradually being lifted during the spring of 2021—thus, several questions were designed to gain a better understanding of the pandemic’s impact on the business community.

KEY FINDINGS

Rating Current Montclair Center Conditions & Services (prior to the pandemic)

- The highest rated services/conditions were **landscaping and tree maintenance** (75% selected ‘good’ or ‘very good’) and **sidewalk and street cleaning (including trash removal)**, which also received roughly 75% of responses as ‘good’ or ‘very good.’ 70% of survey participants consider **programming (e.g. events)** -- **the third highest rated pre-pandemic service/condition -- to be ‘good’ or ‘very good.’**
- The lowest rated services/conditions were **pedestrian safety** – 56% rated this category as ‘fair,’ ‘poor,’ or ‘very poor’ – and **snow removal** (only 10% would qualify snow removal as ‘very good’). Note: *“safety in general”* is not as much of a concern as *pedestrian safety* in particular.

Comfort Level Returning to Downtown

- Not surprisingly, people are most comfortable with outdoor festivals and events as physical distancing measures are lifted in the next few months (42% ‘very comfortable’ and 37% ‘somewhat comfortable’). **80%** of respondents are ‘very comfortable’ or ‘somewhat comfortable’ with **in-person shopping**.
- **Slightly fewer (67%)** are ‘very comfortable’ or ‘somewhat comfortable’ with **personal services** like salons, barbers, and spas). The comfort level for **restaurants and coffee shops** is similar – roughly 67%.

Priorities Over the Next 18 Months

- By far, the highest rated priority is **providing assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs (78% chose ‘very important’)** over the next 18 months.
- The second and third highest priorities are **improving the parking experience** and **ensuring downtown is diverse and welcoming to all**.

Longer Term Priorities

- When asked to provide **three words that best describe respondents’ vision for Montclair Center in the year 2030** (Question 5), the top five most common words were:
 - i. **Diverse (222)**
 - ii. **Vibrant (175)**
 - iii. **Safe (93)**
 - iv. **Parking (i.e., improved parking experience) (93)**
 - v. **Fun (81)**
- **The top two ‘very important’ actions items** (Question 6) are **improving the parking experience** and **recruiting new businesses and diversifying the retail mix**.

- Other actions that respondents chose as ‘very important’ over 50% of the time include:
 - Provide assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs (68%)
 - Ensure downtown is diverse and welcoming to all (66%)
 - Create a safer walking environment (e.g. widen sidewalks, enhance pedestrian crossings) (64%)
 - Create permanent public plazas and outdoor gathering spaces (58%)
 - More beautification (e.g. greening, lighting, public art, street furniture) (53%)
 - Explore ways to slow traffic on Bloomfield (51%)
- **When asked to choose ONE action item**, the top five priorities were:
 - **Recruit new businesses and diversify the retail mix**
 - **Improve the parking experience**
 - **Provide assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs**
 - **Create a safer walking environment (e.g. widen sidewalks, enhance pedestrian crossings)**
 - **More beautification (e.g. greening, lighting, public art, street furniture)**

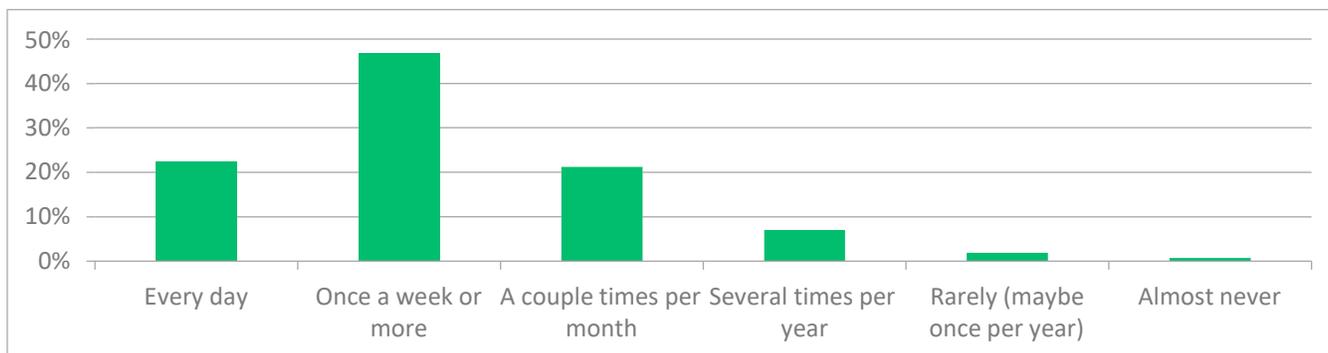
Demographics

- **70% of respondents identify as white, 9% as Black/African-American**, 5% as Hispanic/Latinx, 3% as Asian, and 2% chose “other.” 13% preferred not to answer.
- The age group with the most representation was **50- to 64-year-olds (36% of respondents)**, followed by 35- to 49-year-olds (27% of respondents).
- Nearly **two-thirds of respondents were women**.
- **Montclair residents who live *outside* of the district made up 45% of survey respondents**. 21% live in the Montclair Center district. Half of respondents live in 07042 (which includes the district), 16% live in 07043 (Upper Montclair), and much of the remainder reside in adjacent zip codes.
- **Over half of survey participants have household incomes over \$100,000**.
- 10% of respondents own a business in Montclair Center, and 6% own property in Montclair Center.
- Roughly **22% of respondents spent time in Montclair Center daily** (prior to the pandemic). Another 47% were in the district at least once per week.

MONTCLAIR CENTER TODAY

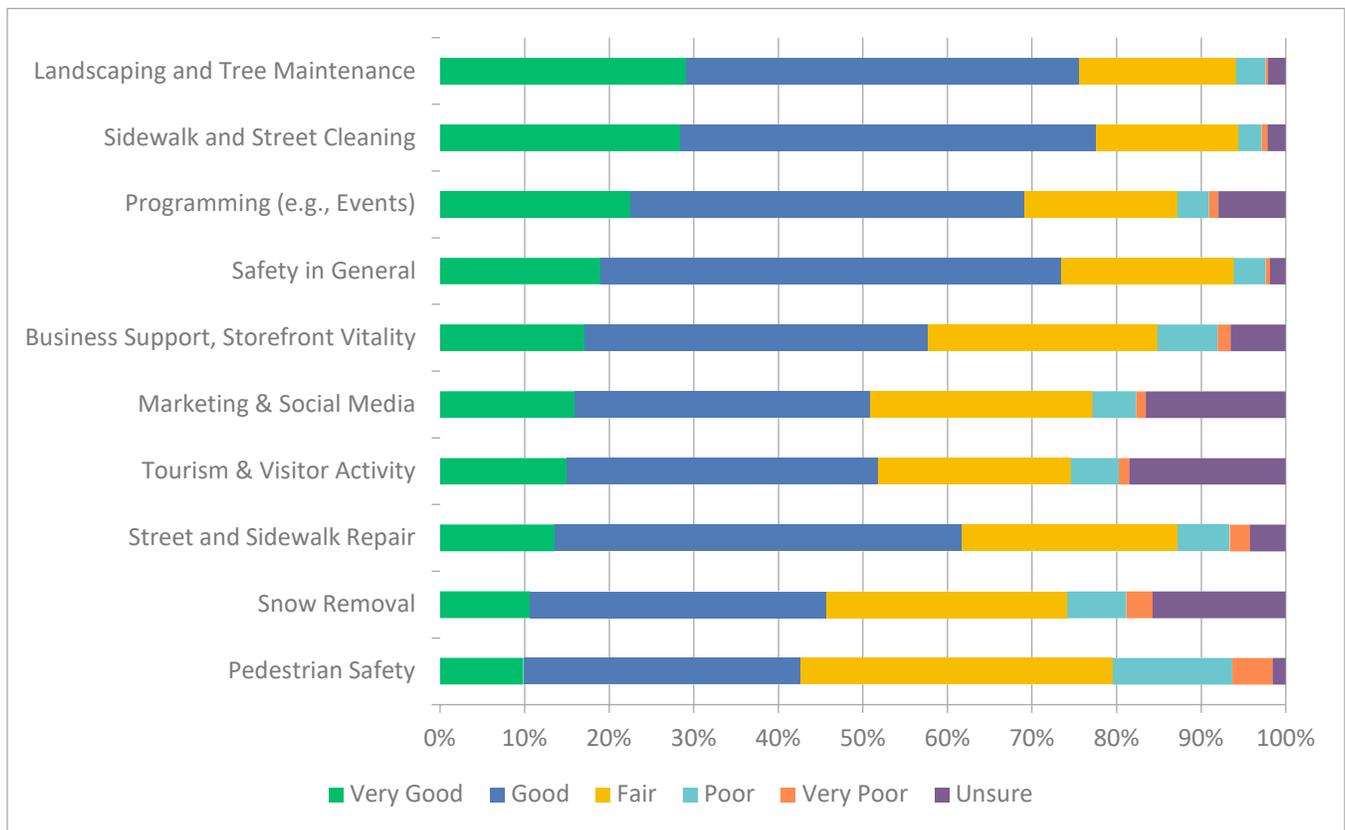
(Q. 1) PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC, APPROXIMATELY HOW OFTEN WERE YOU IN MONTCLAIR CENTER?

The majority of respondents (69%) indicated that they are in Montclair Center at least once a week. Only 3% of respondents were in Downtown either ‘rarely’ or ‘almost never.’



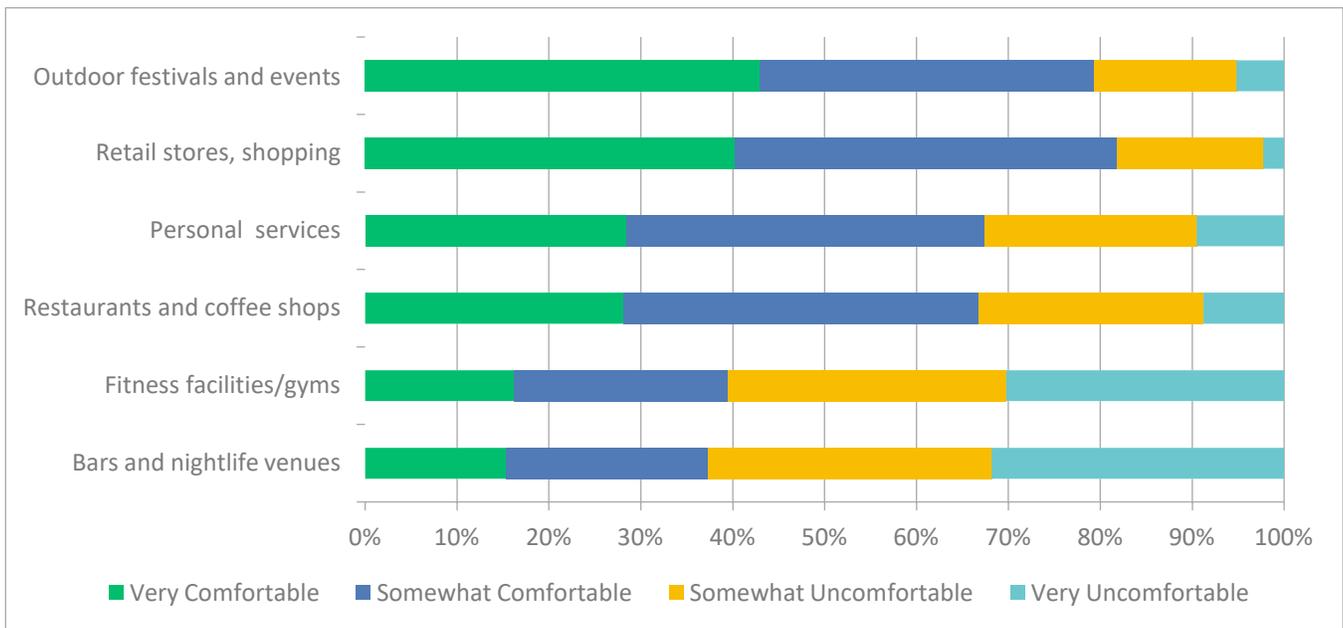
(Q. 2) HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS AND/OR SERVICES IN MONTCLAIR CENTER (PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC)?

The highest rated services/conditions were landscaping and tree maintenance (75% selected 'good' or 'very good') and sidewalk and street cleaning (including trash removal), which also received roughly 75% of responses as 'good' or 'very good.' 70% of survey participants consider programming (e.g. events) -- the third highest rated pre-pandemic service/condition -- to be 'good' or 'very good.' The lowest rated services/conditions were pedestrian safety – 56% rated this category as 'fair,' 'poor,' or 'very poor' – and snow removal (only 10% would qualify snow removal as 'very good').



(Q. 3) AS PHYSICAL DISTANCING MEASURES ARE LIFTED, HOW COMFORTABLE WILL YOU BE IN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS VISITING MONTCLAIR CENTER FOR THE FOLLOWING?

Overall, most survey respondents are at least somewhat comfortable visiting Montclair Center for various services as physical distancing measures are lifted. The two services that most respondents indicated they would still be 'very uncomfortable' visiting are bars and nightlife venues (32%) and fitness facilities gyms (30%).



MONTCLAIR CENTER TOMORROW

(Q. 4) OVER THE NEXT 18 MONTHS, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WILL BE IMPORTANT TO HELP MONTCLAIR CENTER RECOVER?

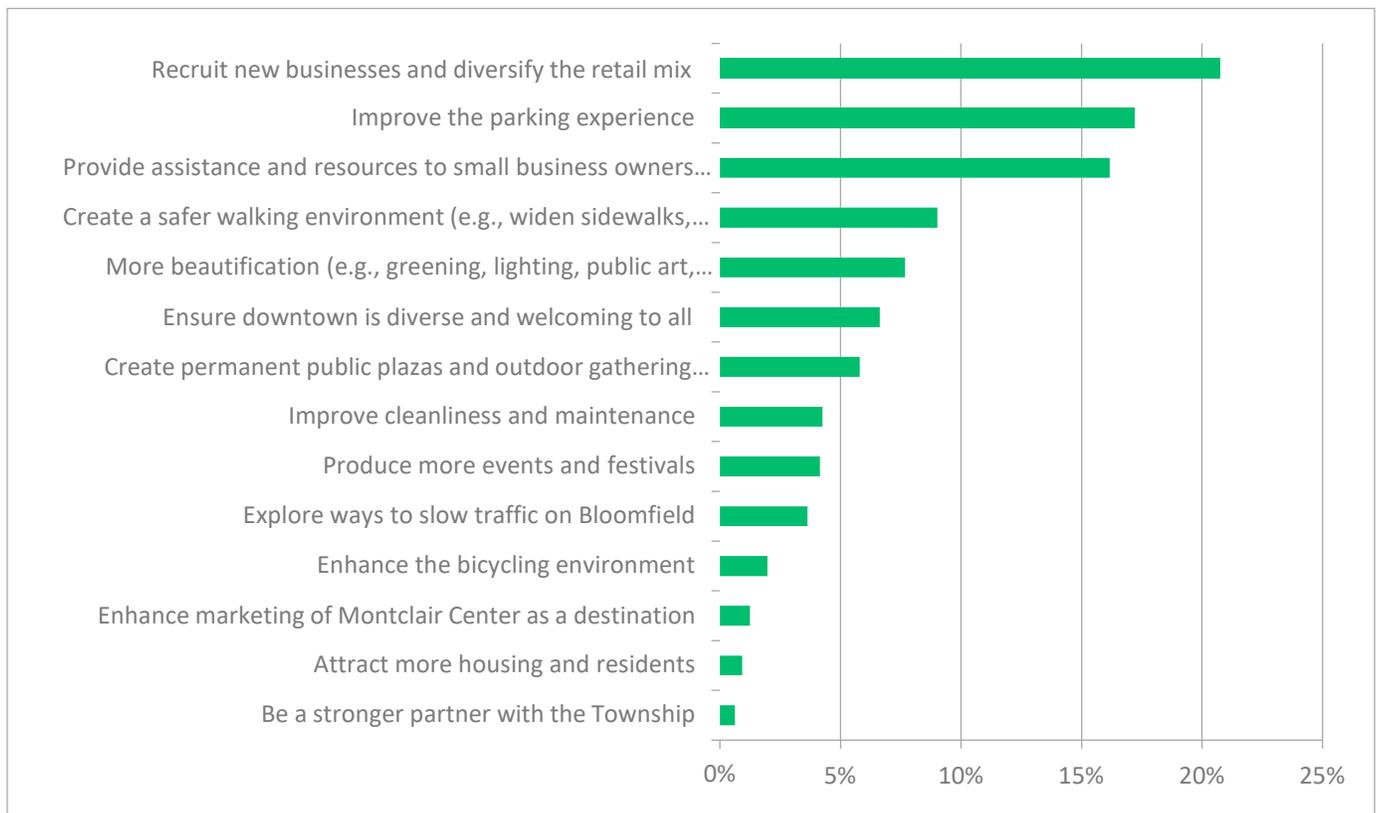
Respondents were asked to rate a series of actions to help Montclair Center recover over the next 18 months as either 'very important,' 'important,' 'somewhat important,' 'not important,' or 'unsure.' The chart below is sorted according to the action's importance. The top three actions considered 'very important' were: provide assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs (78%), improve the parking experience (68%), and ensure Downtown is diverse and welcoming to all (67%).

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Unsure
Provide assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs	78%	17%	4%	1%	1%
Improve the parking experience	68%	18%	10%	3%	1%
Ensure downtown is diverse and welcoming to all	67%	20%	9%	3%	1%
Provide more eating and shopping	58%	29%	9%	2%	9%
Be a stronger partner with the Township	46%	31%	12%	2%	9%
Improve cleanliness and maintenance	33%	40%	21%	4%	1%
Enhance marketing of Montclair Center as a destination	32%	31%	23%	11%	3%
Produce more events and festivals	32%	32%	26%	9%	31%

Create a safer walking environment	64%	23%	9%	4%	0%
Create more permanent public plazas and outdoor gathering spaces	58%	26%	11%	4%	1%
More beautification (e.g. green, lighting, public art, street furniture)	53%	33%	11%	2%	1%
Explore ways to slow traffic on Bloomfield	50%	26%	16%	6%	2%
Be a stronger partner with the Township	41%	32%	16%	4%	8%
Improve cleanliness and maintenance	41%	41%	15%	3%	1%
Produce more events and festivals	34%	36%	22%	7%	1%
Enhance the bicycling environment	33%	24%	24%	15%	4%
Enhance marketing of Montclair Center as a destination	31%	33%	22%	10%	3%
Attract more housing and residents	16%	18%	28%	33%	5%

(Q. 7) TO ACHIEVE YOUR LONG-TERM VISION, WHICH ONE ACTION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT?

Respondents were asked to select ONE action from the previous question’s answer choices. The top responses from survey respondents were: recruit new businesses and diversify the retail mix (21%), improve the parking experience (17%), and provide assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs (16%).



(Q. 8) IF YOU COULD SUGGEST ONE ADDITIONAL AND SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENT TO ENHANCE MONTCLAIR CENTER, NOT LISTED ABOVE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

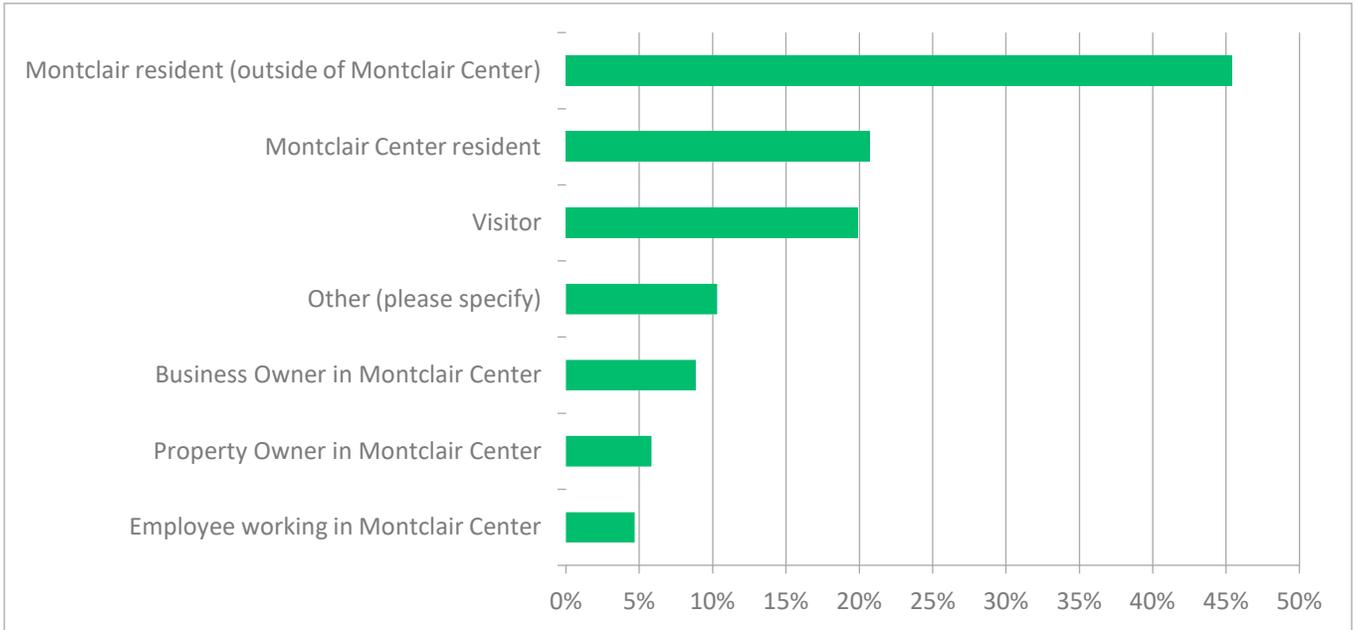
Over 500 of the 973 respondents provided a comment for this open-ended question. Key themes included:

- Consider (periodically or permanently) closing certain streets to vehicle traffic, and overall prioritize pedestrian safety.
- Ensure affordability/access to retail and services for people of all incomes.
- Limit future development, heights, and density.
- Increase outdoor seating, plazas, and open spaces.
- Enhance transit service both in and around the district (i.e. shuttle or trolley), and to and from other places in the region.
- More entertainment options in general, including options for children and teens.
- Attract a movie theater to the district.
- Attract a grocery store.
- Fill vacant storefronts and create a more unified commercial district.
- Recruit and retain locally-owned, independent business and restaurants over chains.
- Encourage more nightlife and businesses open with later hours.
- Provide more hands-on business support and work to better understand challenges.
- More community policing, including walking and bike patrols.
- Extend the BID boundaries.

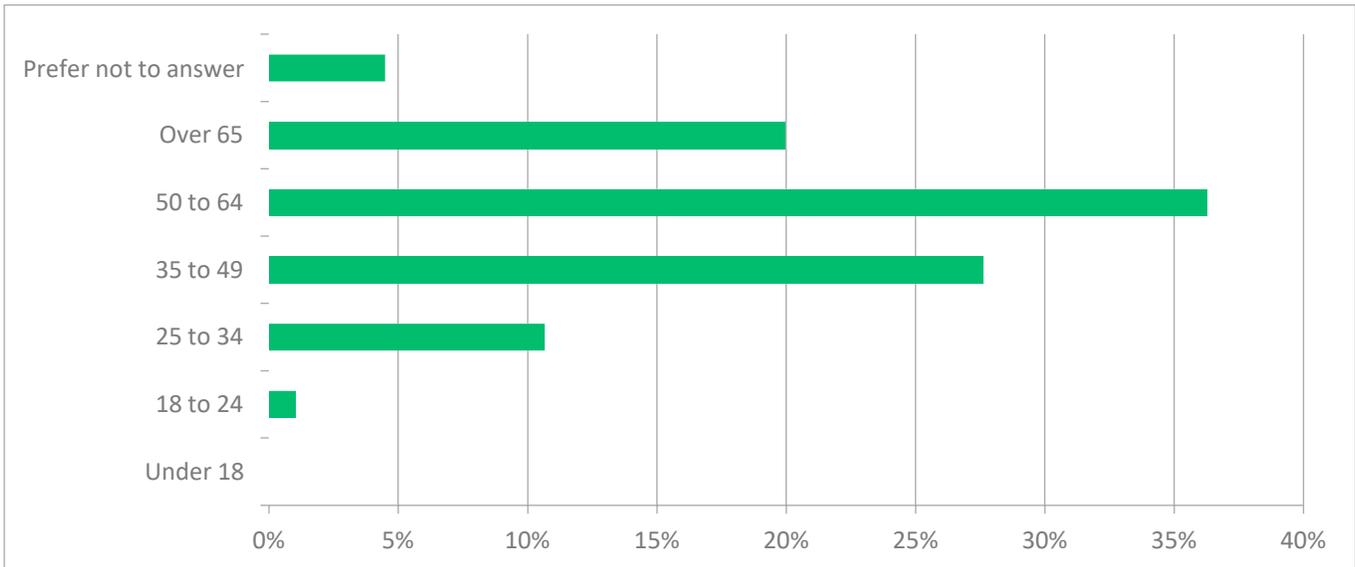
DEMOGRAPHICS

The following charts provide an overview of respondent demographics.

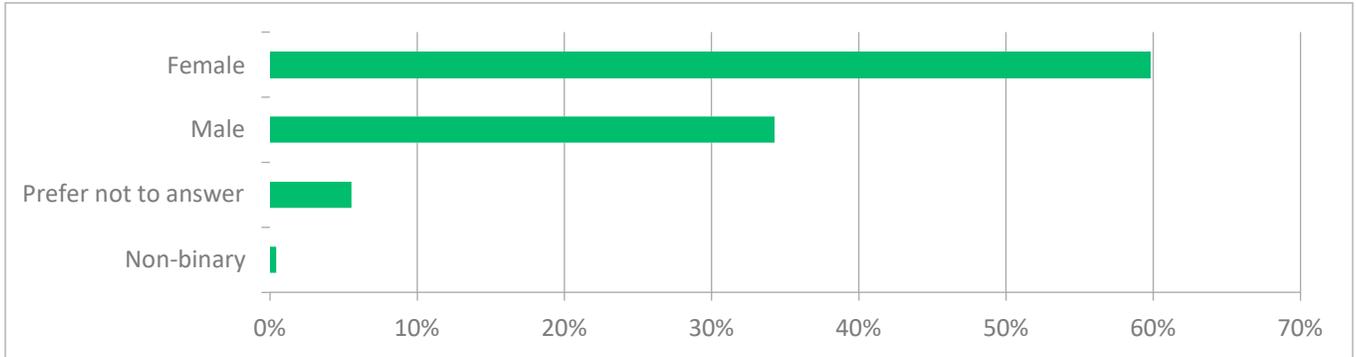
WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBE YOUR PRIMARY RELATIONSHIP TO MONTCLAIR CENTER? (CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY).



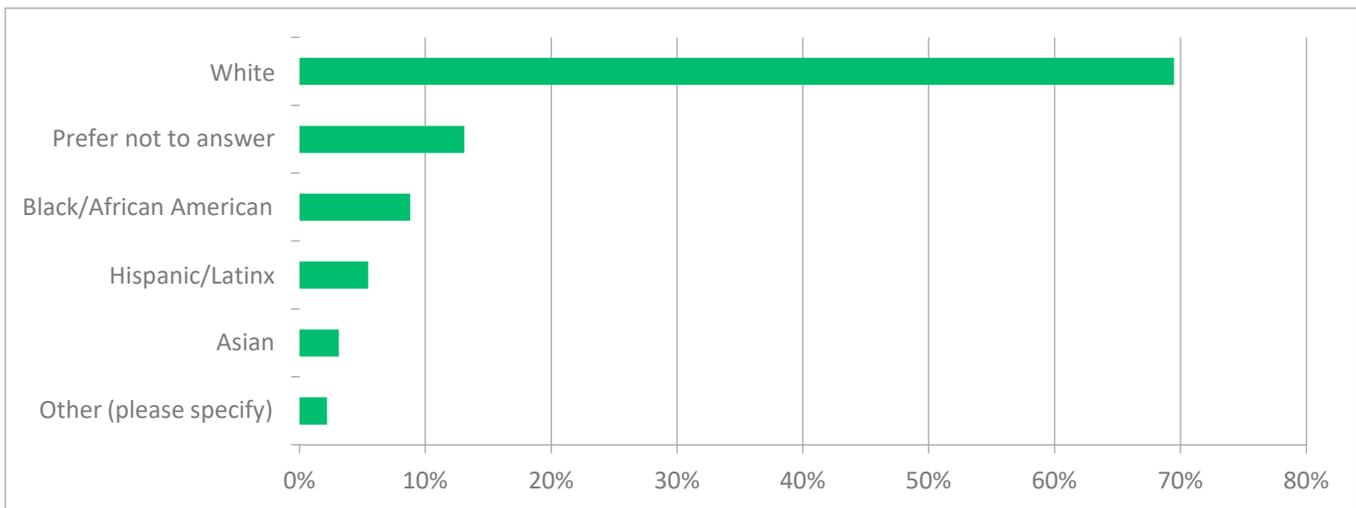
AGE (OPTIONAL)



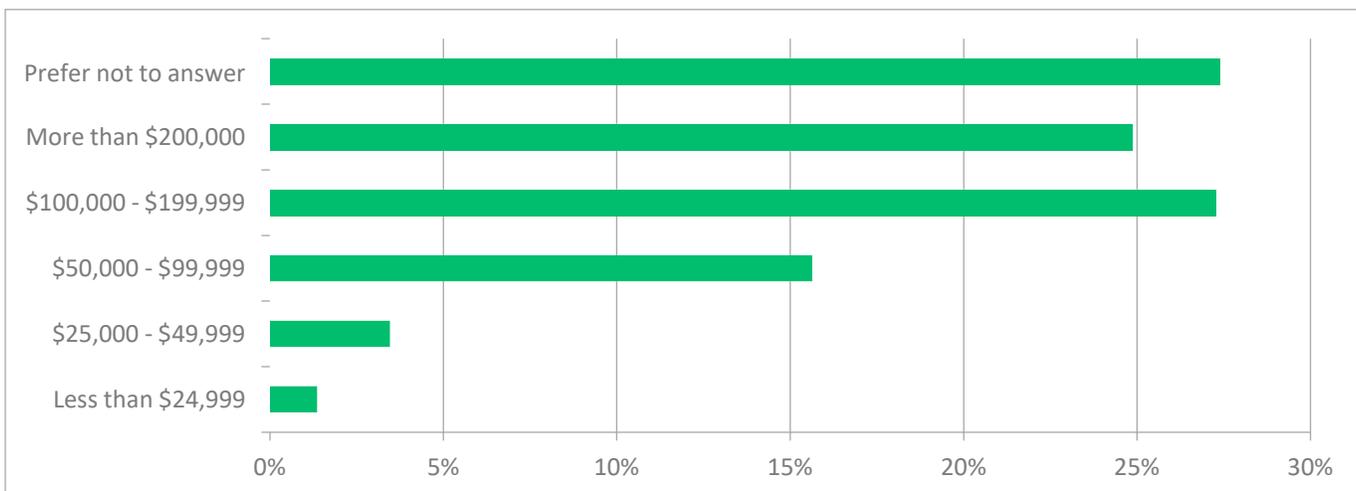
GENDER (OPTIONAL)



ETHNICITY (CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY) (OPTIONAL)



ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME (OPTIONAL)



HOME ZIP CODE (OPTIONAL)

Half of respondents live in 07042 (which includes the district). 16% live in 07043 (Upper Montclair), and much of the remainder reside in adjacent zip codes.

CROSS-TABULATIONS

The online survey results were cross tabulated to see if responses differed based on respondent demographics including relationships to Montclair Center, age, income, gender, and race/ethnicity. *There were no substantial variations in responses to note for gender.*

AGE

The age choices provided in the survey were under 18, 18 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 49, 50 to 64, Over 65, and Prefer Not to Answer. As there were fewer younger respondents overall, results for “under age 34” were also tabulated. There were no respondents under the age of 18.

- Older respondents were less likely to rate current conditions highly. For example, 23% of respondents over age of 65 rated “landscaping and tree maintenance” as very good, compared to 46% of respondents under 34. The same trend was noted for sidewalk cleanliness, snow removal, and other basic services.
- While there was consensus across the age cohorts that pedestrian safety needs improvement, older respondents were much more likely to be concerned about “safety in general” compared to younger respondents.
- Older respondents were also slightly more likely to be concerned about parking. For example, 78% of respondents over 65 consider improving the parking experience a very important long-term priority, compared to 66% of those under age 34.
- In terms of longer-term priorities (Q.6), there was not much variation among the age cohorts, except for a few cases. For example, “enhance the bicycling environment” was rated as ‘very important’ by 40% of the under-34 respondents and by 29% of those over 50. Respondents under 34 were also more likely to choose ‘very important’ to characterize “produce more events and festivals.”

In terms of the one MOST important action to achieve the long-term vision for Montclair Center (Q. 7), there were a few notable differences:

- 14% of the under-34 population chose “explore ways to slow traffic on Bloomfield,” compared to 2% of respondents over the age of 65.
- Those over 65 were slightly more likely to choose “recruit new businesses and diversify the retail mix,” although it was ranked high across the board. At the same time, nearly 40% of respondents under 34 chose “provide assistance and resources to small businesses and entrepreneurs” as their top priority, compared to 16% of those over the age of 65.
- Whereas only 6% of respondents under 34 chose “improve parking” as their top long-term priority, it was chosen by 25% of respondents aged 65 and over, and by 18% of the 50-64 age cohort.

RACE/ETHNICITY

There were some variations in responses based on race/ethnicity of the respondent, including the following:

- In Question 6, which asked respondents to rate priorities for the longer-term vision of Montclair Center, non-white respondents were more likely to choose 'very important' for "providing assistance and resources to small businesses", and "recruiting new businesses and diversifying the retail mix."
- 90% of respondents identifying as Black/African American rated "ensure downtown is diverse and welcoming to all" as 'very important,' compared to 64% of respondents identifying as white (Q. 6).
- White respondents were more likely to rate "more beautification (e.g., greening, lighting, public art, street furniture)" as the most important long-term action (Q. 7).

INCOME

Online survey results were cross-tabulated by annual household income. The income categories provided in the survey were Less than \$25,000, \$25,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$199,999, More than \$200,000, and Prefer Not to Answer.

There were not *considerable* differences among income tiers, with a few exceptions:

- 25% of respondents with incomes below \$49K rated "provide assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs" as the MOST important priority (Q.7), compared with only 9% of respondents who reported incomes over \$200K.
- The higher the income, the more likely "more beautification" was given as the top priority (Q. 7). The same is true of creating a safer walking environment.
- Business owners and visitors were the most likely to rank "improve the parking experience" as 'very important' (both for Q. 4 – regarding actions over the next 18 months and in Q. 5 – regarding longer-term actions).

RELATIONSHIP TO MONTCLAIR CENTER

Survey results were cross-tabulated by respondents' connection to Montclair Center (Montclair Center resident, Business Owner in Montclair Center, Property Owner in Montclair Center, Employee working in Montclair Center, Montclair resident (outside of Montclair Center), and Visitor). Respondents were allowed to select more than one descriptor. There was some variation in responses, overall:

- Downtown visitors (25%) were most likely to rate "safety in general" as very good, compared to 11% of property owners and 16% of residents.
- Only 17% of residents of the district and 18% of non-district residents rated programming (e.g. events) as 'very good,' compared to 30% of visitors, 33% of employees, and 29% of business owners.

The following table highlights slight differences among responses to Question 7 (choosing the one MOST important action to achieve the respondent's vision for the district. The top three most important actions for each category are highlighted in orange (note: more than three are highlighted if there was a tie for third).

	Montclair Center Resident	Business Owner in Montclair Center	Property Owner in Montclair Center	Employee working in Montclair Center	Montclair resident (outside of Montclair Center)	Visitor
Recruit new businesses and diversify the retail mix	23%	14%	27%	16%	21%	17%
Improve the parking experience	8%	27%	14%	14%	17%	19%

Provide assistance and resources to small business owners and entrepreneurs	15%	17%	11%	25%	13%	25%
Create a safer walking environment (e.g. widen sidewalk, enhance pedestrian crossings)	10%	5%	7%	11%	11%	6%
More beautification (e.g. greening, lighting, public art, street furniture)	10%	7%	11%	5%	8%	6%
Ensure downtown is diverse and welcoming to all	6%	8%	4%	7%	8%	5%
Create permanent public plazas and outdoor gathering spaces	8%	4%	11%	5%	7%	5%
Improve cleanliness and maintenance	8%	7%	7%	5%	3%	5%
Produce more events and festivals	4%	2%	0%	5%	4%	5%
Explore ways to slow traffic on Bloomfield	5%	4%	2%	2%	3%	4%
Enhance the bicycling environment	2%	0%	0%	5%	3%	2%
Enhance marketing on Montclair Center as a destination	1%	2%	2%	0%	1%	1%
Attract more housing and residents	2%	1%	5%	0%	1%	1%
Be a stronger partner with the Township	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%