

# MONTCLAIR CENTER BID

## GREAT AMERICAN MAIN STREET AWARD WINNER 2015

Montclair Center BID - Board Meeting  
December 20, 2023, 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.  
Annual Meeting in person at Montclair Film

Board members in attendance: Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Ernst Goldman, Rachael Grochowski, Natalie Haddad, Matt Horrigan, Jaji Packard, Ray Ketchem, Jill Montague, Jacob Nieman, David Placek, Lori Price Abrams, Matt Silverman, Kristen Zachares

Absent: David Cummings, Emer Featherstone, Liz Rich

Staff: Jackie Apicella, Jason Gleason, Aysa Gordon, Abhishake Shah, Christian Powell

Guest: Annual Meeting attendees included over 50 stakeholders downtown.

### I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME

**President Packard called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM.**

### II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES (*attachments*)

**President Packard moved to approve the minutes from the November Board Meeting, seconded by Director Matt Silverman. The motion passed unanimously.**

### III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Business owner Scott Kennedy of Studio 042 commented, “Montclair Center is doing a fantastic job,” with enthusiastic applause from all in attendance.

### IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT (*Jason Gleason*)

Executive Director Gleason presented the Montclair Center Annual Recap.

Some impressive introductory statistics over the past year included:

- Downtown vacancy rates are currently at a very low 6.03%.
- Major festivals attracted 62,600 attendees.
- Festivals generated roughly \$3.9 million for local businesses.
- Grants monies awarded totaled \$208,500.
- Business opportunities downtown created approximately 144 new net jobs.
- New businesses in the district are up from 39 in 2022 to 49 in 2023.

In-Person Engagement- January to December 2022 vs. January to December 2023

- Visits to Montclair are up 12% from 6.7 million to 7.4 million.
- Mother's Day weekend 2023 was the busiest day of the year, with about 40,000 visitors.
- The average dwell time for each visitor to Montclair Center is 137 minutes.

A graph showing Placer.ai data compared the BID's in-person engagement numbers to other comparable districts across the nation, including the West Village, Boston's Financial District, and Kansas City's Central Business District. Montclair outperformed Kansas City's Central Business District visits this year.

In 2023, Montclair Center unveiled a new district management software with interactive public-facing community mapping tools used during the Montclair Film Festival and on Small Business Saturday.

Executive Director Gleason participated in the Township's Unhoused Committee and the "Rodent Roundtable" discussions in collaboration with Township departments to tackle the rodent population. Montclair Center also participated in and contributed \$10,000 to the Vision Zero task force.

### **Marketing and Public Relations**

Social Media engagement- particularly on Instagram- is significantly up:

- Facebook – 12,845 followers, up 1.2%
- Instagram – 14,205 followers, up 239%

Direct Media Engagement:

- Mailchimp – 47.45% open rate, 12,829 subscribers
- Wild Apricot – 84.97% average open rate, 165 stakeholder updates

Experience Montclair Jacqueline Apicella is the New Director of Experience Montclair. This year, Director Apicella was inducted into the NJ Tourism Industry Association. Civic Brand rebranded the DMO with a new name and website, [www.experiencemontclair.org](http://www.experiencemontclair.org). With Director Apicella's efforts, the social media launch for Experience Montclair has yielded an astounding 239% growth.

### **Public Space Enhancement and Activation**

- Jazz Festival, a total of 17,800 attendees, 104 vendors (50 BID businesses)
- Pride Festival, a total of 26,800 attendees, 168 vendors (58 BID businesses)
- Montclair Film Festival, a total of 18,000 attendees, ~2.3 million spent in F&B

The combined three festivals yielded 62,600 attendees and about \$3.9M spent on local businesses.

### **Clean, Safe, and Green**

Director Gleason praised the hard work of the CDS ambassadors in our district. This year, there were 4,191 bags of pedestrian-generated litter, with 2,449 bags from BID trash receptacles, 5,874 bags of improper curbside trash were picked up, and the BIDs Ambassador Team removed 1,784 unsolicited stickers, tags, and ads.

### **Open Discussion**

Board Member Silverman asked about comparing in-person engagement numbers to pre-COVID numbers, and Director Gleason said he could investigate those numbers and follow up.

Drew Kanevsky, co-owner of Stuff By SJ, mentioned that foot traffic is likely heavier on Church Street and asked how to attract more visitors to other areas of Bloomfield Ave, including his own. Director Gleason spoke about networking with other businesses to be creative about drawing in more customers. He also encouraged the development of Lackawanna Plaza to bring more business to this underutilized area.

Rachel Moehl, owner of Wine and Design, spoke about The Jazz Festival's use of the parking lot around her business, which caused her sales to suffer the day of the festival. Director Gleason stressed communication early and often to the Montclair Center BID to help avoid street and parking lot blockages.

Amir Kamal, owner of Dutch's Sandwich Shop, asked about the redundancy of having two similar kinds of businesses near one another and how that might be prevented. President Packard stated that due to confidentiality policies placed on Montclair Center staff, it is ultimately up to the property owners to decide what businesses to bring into the district.

Board Member Councilor Lori Abrams acknowledged Montclair Center BID for its involvement in Vision Zero, emphasizing safe streets for all. She also spoke about using the parking decks and asked if they were being used. Director Gleason said that the decks are at 60% to 70% utilized during peak hours even though they are much better lit with better cameras. He spoke about ways to encourage parking deck usage.

## **V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (*Jaji Packard, President*)**

1. President Packard thanked the three board members stepping down: Celestina Ando, Ray Ketchem, and Robert Squires. She praised all three for their dedication and commitment to their duties on the board.

2. President Packard encouraged the board to consider the election of board officers for 2024. An anonymous survey will be sent to board members who will submit their nominations for board officers. She encouraged all stakeholders and board members to consider a leadership role with Montclair Center BID.

**VI. TREASURERS REPORT** (*Matt Horrigan, Treasurer*)

Treasurer Horrigan spoke about the proposed budget for 2024, which was mailed out to all stakeholders. Montclair Center is slightly under budget for the year to date for 2023. The 2024 budget includes a 2% property owners' assessment increase.

President Packard moved to ratify the 2024 budget, seconded by Director Ernst Goldman. The motion passed unanimously.

**VII. RECRUITMENT, NOMINATION, AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE** (*Jaji Packard, President*)

1. Vote for appointment of recommended nominees to the 2024 board of directors.

**Appointments:**

Neil Grabowsky, Grabowsky Development  
Brian Silver, The Bravitas Group  
Nat Testa, Natlor Group Inc, Testa Advertising

2. Results of the district-wide election of candidates to the 2024 Board of Directors. (\* = Incumbent)

**Business Owners:**

Te'Nijah Bussey, The Loft/ Art is Bond  
Mary Cumella, Gioia Mia  
Stacey Filé, Lifestyle Manager, The MC Hotel  
Ernst Goldman\* 4EverGrafix

**Property Owners**

Jaji Packard\* 18-30 South Fullerton Ave.  
David Placek \* BDP Holdings, LLC 7 Oak Place

**At-Large**

Emer Featherstone\* Chair, The Montclair Foundation  
Jacob Neiman\* Member, Montclair Planning Board  
Elizabeth Rich\* Acting Director, Feliciano Center for Entrepreneurship, MSU

**Non-Profit**

Jill Montague\* Marketing Director, Montclair Film

**Resident**

Matt Silverman\* 172 Glenridge Ave.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS (Jason Gleason)**

Executive Director Gleason presented Secretary Kristen Zachares with **The MVP Board Member** medal for 2023 for her dedication to the board and the committees she serves on. Kristen goes above and beyond for her incredible attendance record, active participation, and insights on the board.

Thank you, Kristen!

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.**

**NEXT MEETING:**

**January 17, 2024, 7:00 PM at the BID Office**