

Montclair Center BID - Board Meeting
April 17, 2024, 7:00 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
In Person at **BID Offices** 26 Lackawanna Plaza or via Zoom

Board members in attendance: Te’Nijja Bussey, Mary Cumella, Stacey Filé, Daniel Garcia-Pedrosa, Ernst Goldman, Neil Grabowsky, Natalie Haddad, Matt Horrigan, Jill Montague, Jacob Nieman, Jaji Packard, Lori Price Abrams, Liz Rich, Brian Silver, Matt Silverman, Kristen Zachares

Absent: David Cummings, Emer Featherstone, Rachael Grochowski, David Placek, Nat Testa

Staff: Jason Gleason, Aysa Gordon, Abhishake Shah

Guest:

- I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME
President Packard called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.
- II. ADOPTION OF FEBRUARY MINUTES (*attachments*)
Board Member Horrigan moved to approve the February minutes and Board Member Garcia-Pedrosa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- III. PUBLIC COMMENTS
No public comments were made.
- IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT (*Jason Gleason, Executive Director*)
New and Noteworthy in Montclair Center
 - **Openings and Closings.** The two new business openings since our last meeting are *Nuts and Delights*- a bakery and café at 555 Bloomfield Ave and *The Space*- an art gallery at 5 South Willow. The one business closing since our last meeting is Palato at 337 Bloomfield Ave. One trend to note is that in the previous year, many art galleries, including art teaching spaces, have opened downtown. Director Gleason also pointed out that famed Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto signed a lease and announced opening a new restaurant at 193 Glenridge Avenue, which is scheduled to open within the year. Board member Grabowsky spoke of his excitement about the project for the downtown area. The new restaurant space is just under 12,000 square feet with a planned expansion. Montclair has been cemented as a restaurant town with the continued opening of high-caliber restaurants.
 - **Montclair Center.** Over the past month, we saw a 1.3% increase in Instagram followers to 286 new followers. The top three posts were *Art Walk Save The Date*, *Bond Vet Supply*, and *Zip Lines Up and Down Bloomfield Avenue*. Director Gleason said the April Fool’s Post was good enough to prompt our insurance agent to email him.

- **Experience Montclair.** Experience Montclair has created several advertisements for current and upcoming events. Montclair's Art Walk was promoted in New Jersey's Jewish News. Montclair Pride will be promoted by the Philadelphia radio station WXPB. NJ Transit ads will be going up for the Walnut Street Fair. We are currently finding advertising outlets for the Montclair African American Heritage Foundation Festival. We are working with the Montclair Art Museum on an art-related advertisement. Edible Jersey and New Jersey Monthly will have advertising related to the district.
- **Placer Data.** Downtown Montclair has had 2.1 million visits this year so far, which is just under 1% lower than last year's numbers for the same period. Director Gleason conjectures that this slight drop is due to the poor weather. In 2024, four of the last six weekends to date have been rainy. In 2023, there were 6 days of rain in the entire month of April with 12.5-degree higher average temperatures. Another trend in the Placer data was an uptick in foot traffic for all days of the week earlier in the day from 8 am to 10 am. Two new gyms and unusual hybrid work patterns might be explanations for this new trend. Director Gleason finished his report by adding that the overall weekday foot traffic has been down slightly, but weekend traffic is showing large increases as compared to last year's first quarter.

V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT (*Jaji Packard*)

A. Recruitment, Nominations and Elections Committee

President Packard discussed needing another board member for the Recruitment, Nominations, and Elections Committee. She said that the board values diversity among its members. The goal is to have board members who have varied skill sets and are from different geographical areas of Montclair. This is why we vote for seven property owners, seven business owners, and seven others for the board. Besides the Executive Committee, this is the only other committee that needs to have its members elected to it. Board member Garcia-Pedrosa talked about the requirements of the job including identifying candidates, gauging interest, recruiting, and helping with the election. President Packard encouraged business owners on the board to self-nominate. The plan is to elect the committee at the May board meeting. She expressed her thanks to Board members Garcia-Pedrosa and Zachares for continuing to be a part of the committee.

B. Main Street Conference

President Packard wished Rachael, Abhi, and Jason happy travels to Birmingham for The Main Street Conference in Birmingham Alabama from May 6th – May 8th. She encouraged them to bring ideas back from the conference to share with the board.

C. Mills Building

Board member Placek has asked Montclair Center to write a letter of support for The Mills Building at 60 South Fullerton which is BID adjacent. They are seeking grant money for necessary repairs including all new air conditioning. At 50,000 sq ft, the building needs a lot of repairs. Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence and Montclair Neighborhood Development Corporation will be collaborating on the Senior Center programming. Additionally, the Mills Building will house administrative offices for nonprofits and a 250-capacity performing arts theater. The theater will allow for productions, speaking engagements, fundraisers, performances, and general community meetings. Montclair Center BID wrote a letter of support for grant funding for the HVAC.

D. BID Budget at Council.

President Packard encouraged support from the board at the upcoming Town Council meeting.

President Packard moved to go into an executive session. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. TREASURERS REPORT (*Matt Horrigan*)

Treasurer Horrigan spoke about the budget breakdown for this quarter which is right on budget thus far. (See chart)

VII. VISION ZERO PRESENTATION (*Jacob Neiman*)

A. Background

1. Vision Zero aims to eliminate pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries by 2028 using a whole series of engineering and educational tools to get it done.
2. Montclair has been actively trying to make its streets safer for a while with existing studies, plans, and reports dating back to 2005. Unfortunately, it hasn't taken hold either in the culture or in the streets. Fatalities and crashes continue to occur.
3. The task force is made up of many different stakeholders from the township, the county, local civic organizations, and others.

B. Vision Zero - Goal

1. Vision. People can be safe on the streets no matter what they choose to do whether they travel by bike, car, foot, or otherwise.
2. Goals. Use data-driven decision-making. Implement proactive policies, procedures, and plans. Work together to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all.
3. How. To do this we will utilize: Vision Zero Guidelines, Safe Systems Approach, Complete Streets Guidelines, and Proven Safety Countermeasures

4. Nearby Models. Other Successful Examples of Vision Zero include NYC and Hoboken. Hoboken hasn't had a pedestrian fatality in over four years.
- C. Safe Systems Approach - Strategy
1. Five Components. The five components are safe road users, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe roads, and post-crash care.
 2. Key Point. People are the most vulnerable road users, and we need to take significant action to protect them.
 3. Redundancy. If you create a series of changes that make injury or death less likely, those series will work together in a generative way to make it harder and harder for injury or death to happen.
 4. Equity. People of color are most likely to be harmed by traffic violence and the national and state statistics back that up. This is a vitally important equity inequality issue.
- D. Complete Streets - Method
1. Definition. Complete Streets as a principle are streets that make space for everyone and all road users.
 2. South Park Street is a good example of a "complete street" because all users have a lot of space, crossing distances aren't particularly long, etc.
 3. Proven Safety Countermeasures. The toolkit you have when working on Vision Zero. They are all the things you can build into the environment to make a road safer.
 - a) street cameras
 - b) widening sidewalks to take away a bit of road space.
 - c) signage so people know what to look for in order not to take their eyes off the road.
- E. Safe Speeds (one of the five components)
1. Board member Nieman spoke about how meaningful it has been to lower speed limits throughout town whether around school zones or the 25-mile-per-hour speed limit throughout the town. He credited the town council and specifically Board member and Councilor Price Abrams for their work on this important measure.
 2. Speed severely increases the likelihood of injury from traffic. As a pedestrian in a car accident, you are far more likely to be seriously injured or die at 30 miles an hour as compared to 20 miles an hour.
 3. Speed impacts visibility and field of vision as well. As you drive faster, you are looking further ahead on the road and can't take in as much around you.
 4. Roadways that look the same can have widely varied speed limits. A lot can be done with a roadway to help the driver pick up visual or physical clues to slow them down.
 5. Complete Streets matches the street design with the speed you **should** be travelling.

- F. Not Statistics... People. When we hear about traffic accidents on the news, we can often lose sight of the fact that traffic violence involves people and it's important to prioritize the lives of those involved.
- G. Vision Zero Montclair Task Force Goals
 1. Revise the Complete Streets policy to make it a lot more operative.
 2. Use a data-driven action plan.
 3. Create an open channel of communication to get the stakeholders on board and explain why this work is so important.
 4. Keep reporting.

H. Discussion.

Board member Horrigan asked if the call-in number was still running to report hazards like potholes. Board member Nieman answered that it is not running effectively yet. Board member Silverman asked about the implementation of Vision Zero after the task force is gone. Board member Nieman answered that there will be a checklist system. For example, when the Public Works Director is deciding if a road needs to be paved, they will have to go through the checklist and make sure the project meets certain criteria including potentially adding in other safety aspects such as bike lanes or bump-outs, or priority signaling for transit busses. There will also be a remaining Vision Zero advisory body that will maintain public pressure to implement these strategies and not just use verbal guarantees that "our streets are safe". Board member Silverman asked about Hoboken and what they do to continue their Vision Zero systems. Board member Nieman responded that they don't have a council but rely more on public pressure which has made the administration prioritize safe streets to keep the program viable. There was an expanded discussion of the timing, sensors, and flow of traffic on Bloomfield Avenue. Board member Nieman finished the discussion by saying that the Complete Streets system will make it more inviting to walk, bike, or scooter and it provides clearly delineated spaces for all those things. The drivers may be a little less easy driving there because that's part of how we keep people safe.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS (*Jason Gleason, Jaji Packard*) (30 MINUTES)

A. Art Walk recap

Director Gleason described the recent Art Walk as both "a smashing success and a total bummer" because of the rain. He found healthy numbers for people who used the Urality app with 3,270 total views of which 1,810 were unique. Mobile views made up 75% of those unique views. We received feedback about the app and there will be tweaks made to help make the app more user-friendly. The business survey is going out tomorrow to get their perspective. The mural auction email will be going out shortly. The social media traction was strong. Some businesses wanted us to cancel because of the rain. Several businesses were happy that it was back. This year we used the traditional art walk model with a few more add-ons including spark talks and murals. Over eighty businesses participated versus fifty-seven at the last Art Walk a few years ago. Certain businesses got the spirit of the event; Gum Drop

Hair Dressing had a big party going on late into the night with a live DJ and live terrariums. Perhaps we can encourage other businesses to follow suit. Director Gleason said he would wait until the surveys and data come back to make a final conjecture about the event. Board member Bussey said that the Art Walk was very well planned and Montclair Center BID did a phenomenal job.

B. Environmental Day Sunday, April 28

Montclair's Earth Fest is coordinated in collaboration with the Township Sustainability Office, Montclair Climate Action, and the Sierra Club. It will take place on South Park Street on April 28th from 12 am – 4 pm and the road will be closed for 5-6 hours. There will be electric cars and school buses, food vendors, and stilt walkers among other things.

C. BID Candidate Forum Tuesday, April 30

We are holding a candidate forum in conjunction with The Montclair Local and UMBA. It will be moderated by NPR's David Folkenflik. The forum will have a similar format to the library forum in that the moderator will ask questions ward-by-ward and position-by-position. Unlike the library, there will be an additional speed round with buzzers to add some levity to the event. All candidates will sit on the stage throughout the forum.

D. Main Street Grant and associated projects update.

There has been no answer from The Main Street Grant yet, but we have initiated the mural work. Director Gleason is 100% confident that we will get the Main Street Grant funds.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Parking PR Working Group kickoff meeting Monday, April 29, 4:00-5:30

On April 29th, there will be a brainstorming session about parking-related ideas. The idea is to change the perception that there isn't parking available in downtown Montclair. We could implement parking signs, QR codes, stickers, and marketing strategically to alert people that parking is always nearby. Board member Price Abrams spoke about the continued negative perception of the parking decks. Board member Haddad suggested that initially the decks could be free for people to get used to the idea and once people are acclimated to parking on the decks, then the decks can start charging.

X. OPEN DISCUSSION

Board Member Nieman brought up the idea of pairing up new BID businesses with long-standing businesses of a similar type to help show them the ropes and give support.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 pm.

NEXT MEETING:

The next full board meeting will be Wednesday, May 15, 2024, at 7 pm at the BID office.