

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Janice Talley, PP, AICP
RE: Master Plan Reexamination Report – Land Use + Parking Subcommittee Report
DATE: May 16, 2023

The Land Use + Parking Subcommittee met on May 9. In attendance were Carmel Loughman, Keith Brodock, and Tony Ianuale. Below is a summary of the Committee's comments.

Issues

The issues identified in this section of the Plan are summarized below with comments from the Subcommittee.

1. Montclair's zoning code typically sets maximum height and density and minimum front, side, and rear setbacks. However, the code is generally silent on important issues related to the location of parking lots, ground floor transparency, where buildings front/open onto, appropriate sidewalk widths, and important architectural elements, among others. **Response:** *Many of these issues are addressed in Montclair's ordinances. Montclair's Zoning Ordinance prohibits parking between the building line and the street line. requires that parking be hidden from street view either by buildings or landscaping. Montclair's Site Plan ordinance requires a minimum of 60% of the street-facing façade of commercial buildings be transparent glass. The Site Plan ordinance also requires that building entrances be oriented to the public street for both commercial and residential buildings. The code also provides general requirements for architectural elements. Many of the finer architectural details are addressed through the design guidelines adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission or through extensive design guidelines in the Township's redevelopment plans. The one issue that should be addressed is to improve the streetscape.*
2. Many residents have expressed concern that recent development has not provided the architectural and site amenities that the community envisioned. Although there are myriad factors which influence amenity decisions, zoning plays an important role. Although existing zoning does provide some bulk and use standards, it is weak on the design details that are important for establishing area character and creating "place." **Response:** *This is not true per the response to Issue 1.*
3. In many areas, private-sector building additions and renovations are constrained by parking requirements that do not sufficiently provide a full menu of modal choices for residents and visitors. The parking ratios currently used by the Township are generally used for suburban areas with minimal transit services and heavily segregated land uses, two conditions not found in many areas of Montclair. Furthermore, there are no provisions to allow for shared parking for mixed-use buildings, development, or districts. **Response:** *The issue in Montclair is that many older buildings do not provide sufficient parking to meet current demand, and parking is often provided by*

centralized parking lots operated by the Township. the Township requires new development to meet the parking demand created by new uses onsite.

Recommendations

The recommendations in the Unified Land Use and Circulation Plan pertaining to Land Use and Parking are summarized below, along with the changes recommended by the subcommittee.

1. Enact land use regulations that promote sustainable development patterns. **Response:** *The land use plan defines sustainable development as increased density in activity nodes near transit stations and commercial districts. This has largely been accomplished in Montclair Center and adjacent to the Bay Street train station. The Unified Plan recommends that incentive zoning in the C-1 Activity Node in the land use plan permit an increase in height to 8 stories and 75 units per acre.*
2. Adopt a form-based code or a hybrid form-based code. **Response:** *The achieved the design intent of form-based code through changes to the zoning ordinance, extensive design requirements in redevelopment plans, and expanded historic preservation controls.*
3. Utilize density bonuses to ensure public benefits accompany high-density development. **Response:** *The Plan recommends that density bonuses be tied to sidewalk/pedestrian infrastructure upgrades, bicycle parking infrastructure, bike share or car share programs, and contributions to planned public transit improvements.*
4. Update zoning Township-wide to encourage walkable environments throughout the Township by implementing the following changes:
 - a. Encouraging short- to medium-length blocks. **Response:** *The Township's street system is already defined and is based on a grid street pattern. Alleys provide access between longer blocks. The Township should consider requiring developments that front on two streets to provide pedestrian passageways.*
 - b. Require that buildings front onto streets. **Response:** *This is already provided in the zoning ordinance.*
 - c. Establish strong building-street connections. **Response:** *This is already provided in the zoning ordinance.*
 - d. In key commercial districts, ensure that buildings contribute to a continuous succession of facades. **Response:** *This is not necessarily true. Some changes in the "building wall" to create interesting plazas or open space areas create visual interest. Increased setbacks from the street may be appropriate to provide additional open space if this area is not used for parking.*
 - e. Prohibit or discourage off-street parking from fronting onto or being visible from the street. **Response:** *This is already prohibited in the zoning ordinance.*
 - f. Give developers incentives to provide their residents with alternatives to individual car ownership. **Response:** *The Township has included requirements for developers to provide car share services through redevelopment and as part parking variances.*
 - g. Establish appropriate sidewalk widths. **Response:** *Sidewalk widths have remained the same as the Township's commercial districts include a zero foot front yard setback. Many redevelopment plans include a larger front yard setback designed to create larger sidewalks, plazas and more open space between the building line and the street line.*

- h. Permitted uses should be defined according to generic categories and not specific exact retail types since exact types change quickly with time. **Response:** *The existing zoning includes a combination of general categories and specific uses that have been developed in response to specific land use issues. It is important that the ordinance continues to address new land use issues. Most of the larger commercial projects approved or built in Montclair post 2016 were office uses, with 125,316 square feet of new office space approved. Much of this office space is medical office, including the 45,000 square feet of medical office space that was approved as part of the Mountainside Hospital Redevelopment Plan (and which is in Glen Ridge). The only light industrial class space approved in Montclair Township is an 82,660 square foot self-storage facility approved at 103 Grove Street. Cannabis-related uses are a new use in Montclair as the Township opted-in to permit cannabis-related uses to locate within the Township. The local ordinance established local requirements for cannabis uses to permit three cannabis retailers, one cannabis cultivator and one cannabis manufacturer in the Township. The zoning ordinance was amended to identify the areas where these uses are permitted as conditional uses. The Planning Board has heard three applications for conditional use permits for cannabis retailers and currently the Township has one cannabis retailer located on Bloomfield Avenue. The Township Council is evaluating applications for the two remaining cannabis retail uses.*
- i. Ensure that high quality pedestrian amenities are used and support access for all. **Response:** *The Township created a pilot program for parklets to provide more outdoor space for pedestrians and customers. The problem with parklets is that it takes up valuable curbside space which is increasingly needed for deliveries and short-term parking. More benches should be provided to serve as pedestrian amenities.*
- j. Conduct a Township-wide comprehensive parking study to consider revising minimum parking requirements. **Response:** *The Township retained Nelson Nygaard and Kimley Horn to prepare comprehensive, Township-wide Parking Management Plan in 2016. The Plan recommended changes to the parking requirements and parking management, but many of these recommendations have not been implemented.*
- k. Ensure that well-marked and well-lit crosswalks are provided throughout the Township. **Response:** *The Township has provided new traffic lights for mid-block crosswalks along Bloomfield Avenue and flashing beacons at key crosswalk locations throughout the Township.*
5. Implement shared parking and other parking management tools. **Response:** *Montclair Township has incorporated shared parking into all the redevelopment plans since the Unified Land Use and Circulation Plan was adopted. The COVID 19 pandemic paved the way for acceptance of remote and hybrid office work which has significantly improved the work/life balance for many office workers. According to a 2022 McKinsey study, 58 percent of employees in the United States now have the option to work remotely for all or part of the week, 33 percent can work remotely on a full-time basis, and 23 percent can work remotely part-time or on occasion.¹ While remote working has led to decreased demand for office space in large cities and office parks, the office market in smaller downtowns such as Montclair has remained strong. Hybrid work schedules, however, have impacted office parking, commuting patterns, and public transportation. Similarly, parking for residential uses has changed as more office employees work from home.*

¹ McKinsey & Company, "[Americans are embracing flexible work – and they want more of it.](#)" June 23, 2022.

As indicated in Table 1, parking activity in the Township’s parking decks has decreased from pre-pandemic levels with activity at the Bay Street deck decreasing by 5.8 percent and activity at the Crescent Deck decreasing by 10.7 percent.

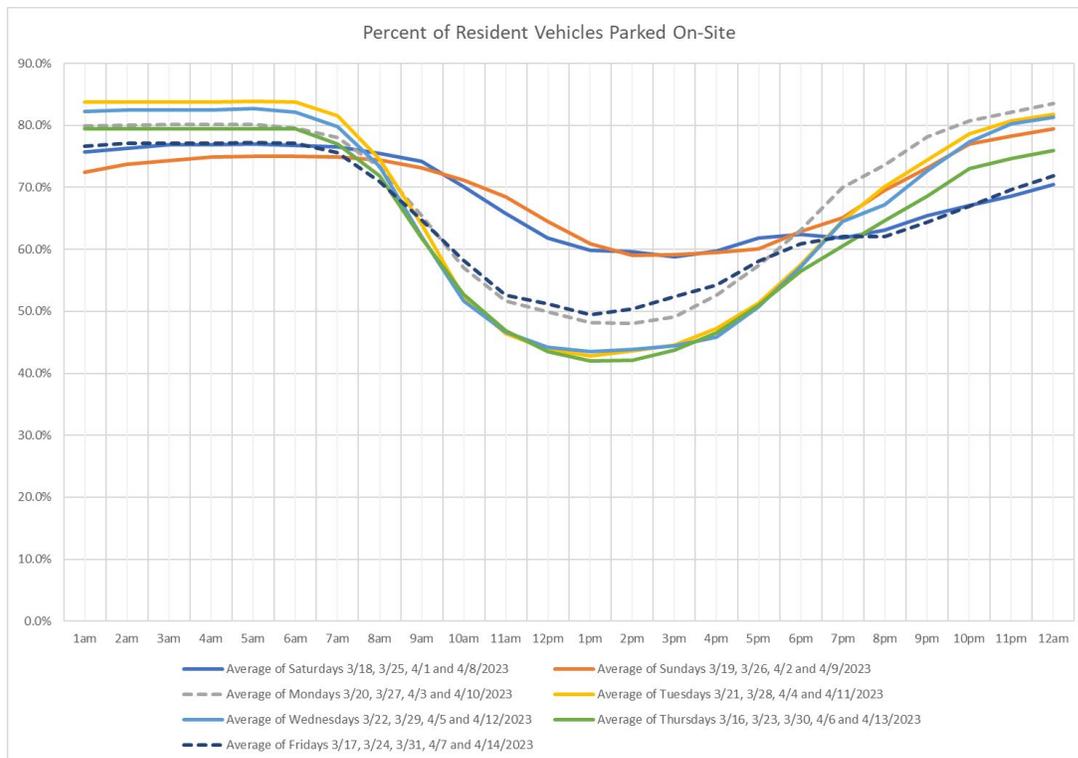
Table 1: Parking Deck Occupancy

Township of Montclair, Essex County, New Jersey					
Parking Deck	Peak Occupancy Time	Total Peak Occupancy, 2019	Total Peak Occupancy, 2023	Net Change	Percent Change
Bay Street Deck	12 – 1 pm	51,674	48,664	-3,010	-5.8%
Crescent Deck	1 – 2 pm	52,926	47,228	-5,698	-10.7%
Midtown Deck	7 – 8 pm	NA	9,588		

Source: Montclair Township Parking Utility

Anecdotal evidence suggests the most popular work from home weekdays are Mondays and Fridays. Level G Associates, the Planning Board’s parking expert, evaluated current shared parking trends to determine if the shared parking process included in the Township’s redevelopment plans is valid post-pandemic. For the purposes of providing assistance for this evaluation, a nationally known parking management company shared hour-by-hour parking occupancy data obtained from the gated parking access control system of a downtown Montclair multi-family residential development every day between March 16 and April 14, 2023. The results are provided in Exhibit 1 and summarized below:

Figure 1: Percent of Resident Vehicles Parked On-Site



As indicated, the anecdotal belief that more individuals tend to work from home more so on Mondays and Fridays is confirmed. Average midday parking occupancy rates bottom out in the range of 42 to 44% on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays but increase to the 48 to 52% range on Mondays and Fridays.

The shared parking allowance factor included in the Township's redevelopment plans conservatively assumes that 60% of residential cars will remain on-site during weekday midday periods. However, the recently obtained occupancy data indicates the actual highest amount remaining on-site is in the 48 to 52% range on Mondays and Fridays. As a result, it is determined that the redevelopment plans' shared parking factor is inherently conservative and capable of accommodating shifting work schedules that have resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic.

6. Adjust parking requirements. **Response:** *The Township has eliminated the parking allowance that encouraged adaptive reuse of buildings in the C-1 and C-3 zone districts by exempting uses with a higher parking requirement from providing parking. Similarly, the parking requirement exemption allowing a one-time increase of 15% in gross floor area for existing buildings in these zones has also been eliminated. The impact of these changes on new investment in existing buildings should be evaluated.*
7. Optimize public parking inventory. **Response:** *A 2021 parking occupancy study prepared by Tim Haahs Associates indicates that on-street metered parking spaces in the central business district are often filled to capacity while scores of vacant spaces sit empty in the Crescent Deck, No. Fullerton Deck, and other public parking facilities. Currently, the rate for 2 hours of parking at an on-street meter is \$2.00 (\$1.00 per hour). The rate for 2 hours of parking at the Crescent Deck is \$4.00 (\$2.00 per hour). Moreover, on-street metered parking is free after 7PM. On-street parking is clearly the first choice for parking in the CBD. It has been demonstrated that parking demand patterns can be altered and/or redistributed using pricing strategies. For example, if Montclair's on-street parking fees were to be increased to \$3.00 per hour and the hours of operation extended to 11PM or later, a certain portion of current on-street meter users would migrate to less expensive parking in the Crescent Deck, No. Fullerton Deck, and other parking areas. It is recommended that the Township seriously consider implementing this or a similar operating model, perhaps in conjunction with the opening of the Midtown Parking Deck. It should be noted that this operating model is consistent with the Township's Master Plan which states:*

"In commercial areas, the Township should price curb parking to place a premium on on-street parking. A significant differential between the price of on-street and structured parking would encourage longer term parkers (such as those parking for more than 2 hours) to park elsewhere, and keep on-street parking for shorter, higher turnover parking, maximizing the use of on-street spaces. This would discourage long-term use and encourage higher turnover".

The increase in the number and frequency of deliveries for households and businesses has created a need for more on-street loading and short-term parking. local streets are being used for increased pick-up and delivery parking and double-parking has become a serious problem on Township streets. The impacts from increasing delivery truck activity on local streets are leading to poor air quality, considerably more traffic congestion, and extra stress on local infrastructure. Trucks and cars frequently double park on local streets to make deliveries. Our local streets need to be redesigned to provide more loading areas as well as short-term parking to create safer circulation for all vehicles, while also providing safe means of travel for pedestrians and micromobility vehicles.