



# Mayor's Downtown Task Force

## Initial Report of Research and Recommendations

April 4, 2017

*Out of all of the busy Main Streets throughout the Garden State, Gannet New Jersey voted Westfield – an upscale Union County town that offers Old World-charm as well as modern sophistication – as the best destination for shopping.*

*– MyCentralJersey.com, March 19, 2017*



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# A Brief History of Downtowns

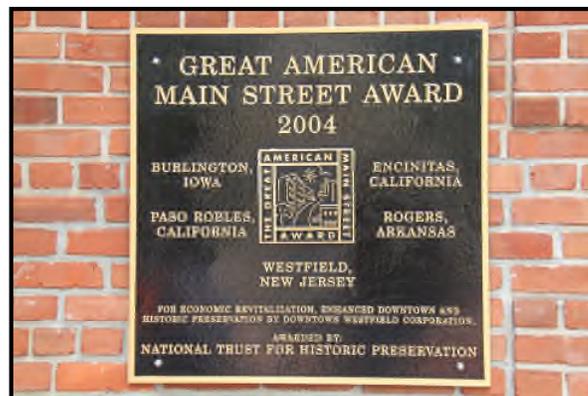
According to Main Street America™, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the entity that bestowed the prestigious “Great American Main Street Award” on the Town of Westfield, the first community east of the Mississippi River to be so honored:

Before World War II, Main Street was the community’s primary commercial hub. Downtown buildings usually had several tenants – typically a ground-floor retailer, several upper-floor offices or apartments; together, these tenants provided enough rent for property owners to keep their buildings in good condition. The presence of the post office, library, banks, and local government offices added to the steady flow of people downtown. Not only was Main Street the center of the community’s commercial life, it was also an important part of its social life; people thronged the streets on Saturday nights to meet friends, see a movie and window-shop.

In the past 40 years, America’s downtowns have changed drastically. The creation of the interstate highway system and subsequent growth of suburban communities transformed the ways in which Americans live, work and spend leisure time. With improved transportation routes, people found it easier to travel longer distances to work or shop. Roads that once connected neighborhoods to downtown now carried residents to outlying shopping strips and regional malls. Throughout the nation, in town after town, the story repeated itself.

## And the Good News is....

The Town of Westfield has been most fortunate in that, with very few hiccups along the way, its downtown has avoided the drastic changes described above and has remained successful, earning many accolades over the years from a variety of independent sources. A sampling of some of the more recent follows.



In naming “2016’s Best Small Cities in America”, analysts from the personal finance website, “WalletHub,” compared nearly 1,300 U.S. cities with populations between 25,000 and

100,000 based on 30 key indicators of livability. Westfield topped the list for “Economic Health” and overall was listed in the top 1 percent of the best small cities in America.

In its September/October 2016 edition, Industry magazine refers to Westfield as, “One of the Garden State’s most vibrant and alluring shopping destinations, this Town still manages to retain its quaint village appeal and colonial character.”

In a September 2016 feature article, “Westfield, N.J., Where Small Town Meets Urban”, The New York Times describes the appeal of Westfield as: “offer[ing] characteristics typically associated with urban living — a bustling downtown, a vibrant cultural scene and good transportation options — along with many benefits of suburban living, like attractive homes, well-regarded schools and a sense of community.”

On March 19, 2017, MyCentralJersey.com reported, “Out of all of the busy Main Streets throughout the Garden State, Gannet New Jersey voted Westfield – an upscale Union County town that offers Old World-charm as well as modern sophistication – as the best destination for shopping.”

In almost all of the accolades the town has received, the downtown is mentioned as a significant factor adding to the town’s overall appeal and liveliness. The economic benefit to the community of a vibrant downtown is obvious. Westfield’s downtown, however, is more than just an economic benefit – it is truly a social and cultural meeting place. The central location, the appealing architecture, the physical layout, its walkability, the independently owned shops, the personal and professional services, the restaurants, the national retailers, the festivals, the music.....all contribute to the heartbeat of the community.

## **Bustling, yet a Small Town Feel**

What is remarkable about Westfield among its many attributes is its “small town” feel, yet it is a town with a population of over 30,300 people in an area of less than 7 square miles. The heart of the community, the 18-block downtown, is home to over 450 businesses — a pleasant mix of independently owned shops, national brands and franchises, professional services, personal services, and more than 50 restaurants serving every imaginable fare. More than one-third of the downtown’s retail shops and restaurants have been doing business in Westfield for 25 years or more. The downtown is also home to the train station with the highest



ridership on the Raritan Valley line, Park Plaza (9/11 Memorial, World War I Monument, World War II monument, Spanish American War Monument, Vietnam War Memorial Wall, Martin Luther King monument, and Foundation Park), the Rialto movie theatre, a Revolutionary War cemetery, and Westfield Fire Headquarters, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Bordering the downtown is the Westfield Memorial Library, the busiest public library in Union County; Mindowaskin Park and

Pond; the Westfield YMCA; the Reeves House, home of the Westfield Historical Society; several houses of worship; schools; and attractive residential neighborhoods.

## Treasuring and Preserving the Downtown

To be clear, the importance of the downtown has never been taken for granted by the Town. As a matter of practice, the Town Council and the Town’s professional staff keep a close watch on the municipal infrastructure, land use, and the various retail, economic, demographic and cultural trends that may affect the downtown.



In addition, over 2 decades ago, the Town created the Special Improvement District, or SID, in accordance with the New Jersey’s Special Improvement District Act, N.J.S.A. 40:56-65, et seq. The Downtown Westfield Corporation, or DWC, is the management entity of the SID and serves essentially as the economic development arm of the downtown business district.

The DWC is guided by a volunteer board appointed by the Town Council comprised of, among others, 2 merchants, 2 downtown property owners, 2 residents, and a Council member. The board along with a staff of 3 acts to fulfill the DWC’s vision that includes keeping Westfield a preferred destination where people want to live, work and visit, strengthening the downtown as the center of community life, improving the District’s economic viability by supporting existing businesses, encouraging the establishment of new enterprises, and supporting cultural activities that complement existing stores and services. One of its most important functions is to act as a facilitator for individuals or companies interested in opening a business in the downtown.

The DWC works year-round to promote Westfield’s downtown interests, including organizing the Sweet Sounds Jazz nights, Girls’ Night Out, Sidewalk Sale Days, Restaurant Weeks, “Welcome Home to Westfield” holiday events, and the annual 5K Pizza Run (the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest 5K race in the State) to name just a few. It also distributes promotional inserts in printed media on a regular basis, produces ads for TV, maintains the comprehensive DWC website ([www.westfieldtoday.com](http://www.westfieldtoday.com)), produces a monthly online newsletter, and publishes the “Destination Westfield” directory of which 80,000 copies are distributed annually.

## Recognizing Change

To be sure, with the advent of Internet-based sales and consumers’ growing online shopping habits, the Town has been keeping a close eye on the rapidly changing retail paradigm. While at any given time a number of store-front vacancies are to be expected for any number of reasons – a merchant retires, a franchise does not renew its lease because the location no longer meets its corporate model, a parent company closes its brick and mortar stores in favor of an exclusively online presence, market changes, and sometimes, unfortunately, an unsuccessful business venture – the sight of a vacant storefront for an extended period of time is disconcerting, and when a few more vacancies pop up and are not filled as quickly as in the past, it’s time to take a closer look at what forces are at play.

What is happening in the retail sector that may be affecting the downtown? Are there other cultural influences? The following factors are significant:

1. **The changing retail paradigm is wide-ranging.** Nationally, big box stores are closing. In 2016, Walmart announced plans to close 150 locations throughout the country, Sears announced it would close 78 Kmart and Sears outlets, and Macy's is closing 100 stores. Recently, 17 major businesses that were based in or had a significant footprint in New Jersey have declared bankruptcy – Sports Authority, Eastern Mountain Sports, Aeropostale, Drug Fair, A & P, and Saladworks to name a few. Abercrombie and Fitch announced it is closing 60 of its stores, but noted that despite a decline in its brick-and-mortar sales, their online sales have grown, accounting for a quarter of the company's net sales. According to Dunham-Jones, a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology who specializes in suburban redevelopment: "Of the roughly 1,200 enclosed malls in the U.S., around one-third are dying."
2. **Demographics are changing.** Millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) have passed Baby Boomers as the largest living generation in U.S. history and as a generation, have yet to reach their prime spending years. Nearly 65% of Millennials are renters. According to a report by Together North Jersey, a coalition of nearly 100 partners formed to develop a comprehensive plan for sustainable development in 13 northern N.J. counties, "Millennials' choices about where to live and work will shape communities for years to come. And those preferences are markedly different from those earlier generations...Millennials generally share a preference for urban, walkable communities with a variety of activities, amenities and housing options...". James Hughes, Dean of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, summed up this major demographic shift in one sentence during his testimony at a late 2016 state legislative hearing: "The bottom line in brief is millennials now rule."
3. **Walkable downtowns are desirable.** Developers, investors and planners are recognizing the growing desire of not only Millennials, but Seniors as well, to live where they do not have to always rely on a car.
4. **E-commerce has increased steadily in the past decade.** According to the Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce, the third quarter 2016 U.S. retail e-commerce sales estimate increased 15.7 percent ( $\pm 1.9\%$ ) from the third quarter of 2015 while total retail sales increased 2.2 percent ( $\pm 0.7\%$ ) in the same period. Amazon Prime reported that it shipped more than 1 billion items around the world during the 2016 holiday season, more than 5 times its sales during the same period last year.
5. **Restaurants are important drivers in retail.** In December of 2016, *Collier's International* reported on the rising role of food in retail. "People are dining out more often at all price points, new restaurant and food concepts are exploding and opportunities are being created for retail centers of all types. Retail centers are increasingly creating vibrant and lively areas anchored by a collection of food offerings." *Bisnow*, one of the largest producers of commercial real estate news, explains: "Most consumers are driven by convenience today; that's why physical retailers have lost so

much traffic to online competitors. The great thing to note about food and beverage tenants is they provide a social experience that can't be found online.”

## Maintaining a Positive Perspective

While it is understandable that the storefront vacancies are a source of concern, it is important to not fall victim to hyperbole. Keep in mind, with its deep heritage and record of success, the Town has grown accustomed to a healthy occupancy rate that consistently exceeds the recognized standard of 90% or more. Remember, too, that it is a normal part of the business cycle for there to be a number of store-front vacancies.

According to the DWC, as of the date of this report there are approximately 200 retail storefronts in the downtown and 14 retail vacancies, an occupancy rate of 93%. (When using square footage as the measurement, the occupancy rate is approximately 88%, a reflection that the few storefronts that are vacant are the larger ones.) Such occupancy rates along with the thriving eateries and popular downtown events confirm that Westfield is still a premier destination for dining, shopping, arts and entertainment. The sidewalks and restaurants are full of life, particularly in the evenings and on weekends. Buildings are well-maintained. Downtown events are popular and well attended. Developers are investing in the downtown. New businesses are opening. Established businesses are expanding. To be sure, the downtown is not fading! Rather, it is experiencing a period of transition as it adjusts to the changing norms in demographics and retail.

## The Town Acts

The Town not only monitors the health of the downtown, it acts on matters that fall within its purview. In recent years, for example, the Town has revised the previously antiquated liquor license ordinance to allow restaurants greater flexibility in serving their guests while ensuring that the establishment remains a restaurant and not a bar. The sidewalk café season has been elongated. The cost of employee parking permits has been reduced. A dedicated downtown division of the Department of Public Works has been created to optimize beautification efforts and maintain the infrastructure. Downtown roadways have been repaved and intersections have been improved, including adding curb extensions at Quimby and Elm Streets and Elm and East Broad Streets, where the County administered a federal grant to revamp “bank square”.

Cognizant of the need to attract and retain a regular influx of people to live, shop, dine, use the professional services, and use the personal services in the downtown, and recognizing the preferences and needs of Millennials and Seniors, the Town has been working with investors and builders in the planning of three new development projects within the downtown area, all 3 representing significant investments in the downtown’s future while preserving the character that makes Westfield such a special place.

The first project is the 70 unit one and two bedroom luxury residential building located at the intersection of South Avenue and Central Avenue. Construction at this location will be completed shortly.



The second project is the redevelopment of the “Jolley Trolley” site. The construction of a new building will contain not only retail space, but a total of 20 one and two bedroom residential units. Construction is well underway and is expected to wrap up this year.

The third project is the planned development at the intersection of West Broad Street and Rahway Avenue where the construction of a residential building containing 31 units is proposed. All approvals are in place, the site has recently been sold to a builder, and construction will commence in short order.

These developments all share some important and beneficial characteristics, including they are all modern and architecturally appealing, they all represent improvements to currently underutilized properties located at highly visible locations within our downtown area, and they all will provide easy access for the residents to the goods, services, and entertainment that downtown Westfield provides. Further, one of the tenets of destination downtowns is that visitors will go where the residents go. The more residents in the heart of the downtown frequenting the downtown businesses, the likely more visitors will do so as well.

## **Formation of the Mayor’s Downtown Task Force**

Although the downtown remains a premier destination, in light of the changes nationwide in demographics and the retail sector and in order to enhance the vitality of the downtown, the Mayor’s Downtown Task Force was formed in July of 2016, tapping the talent in the community and the expertise of the in-house professionals. Membership includes Council members, the Town Attorney, the Planning Board Attorney, the Town Administrator, the Town Planner, the President of the Board of Education, residents, a real estate professional, the Chairman of the Board of Adjustment, and the Executive Director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation. And to provide a fresh set of eyes on our downtown and minimize any innate biases or preconceived notions, the Town engaged the services of an outside development consultant to accompany the Mayor and Task Force members on a walking audit of the entire downtown.

The mission of the Task Force is to identify the factors within the town’s scope of authority and develop recommendations to present to the Town Council that will serve to promote economic development and sustainability for many years to come.

To be sure, this must be a collaborative effort among all the stakeholders, including but not limited to, merchants, restaurateurs, property owners, commercial realtors, residential realtors, residents, other business owners, and community leaders, as the stakeholders not only stand to benefit from a healthy central business district, they also share in the responsibility to make sure they are part of the solution and not a source of the problem. The local government alone cannot reverse global trends or changes in demographics. However, the town can and will continue to spearhead the movement to identify concrete, sustainable actions to keep our downtown vibrant.

Such an ambitious goal with the potential to impact the downtown for decades to come no doubt requires adequate time for comprehensive review. The Town does not want to fall

victim to the illusion of a quick fix. As Main Street America™ warns, those downtowns that have made cosmetic changes or tried to imitate malls ultimately failed because they did not address the fundamental problem – shifting market preferences.

The changes in the retail sector are complex and seismic. Consequently, the Town must proceed systematically and strategically and it needs to be very careful about unintended consequences. While focusing attention on the downtown retailers, the Town must also be sure to keep in mind the needs of existing businesses, both in the downtown and outside of the downtown.

## Optimism

Reviewing the conditions in the downtown districts of other towns in New Jersey demographically comparable to Westfield as well as downtowns in other parts of the country, it is clear that the challenges ahead are not unique to Westfield alone. Westfield, however, has much cause for optimism.

1. Despite the changing retail paradigm, Westfield is still a premier destination for dining, shopping, arts and entertainment.
2. The National Retail Foundation (NRF), the world's largest retail trade association, representing discount and department stores, home goods and specialty shops, Main Street merchants, grocers, wholesalers, chain restaurants and Internet retailers from the United States and more than 45 countries, reports: "Physical stores are still formidable at selling merchandise, owning about 90% of the market share."
3. The Town has the SID and its management entity, the DWC, in place to promote the interests of the downtown 365 days a year.
4. Trader Joe's was eager to return to Westfield and reopened less than a year after its roof collapsed and was forced to shut down, and business is booming.
5. Addam's Tavern, an upscale farm-to-table restaurant, invested millions in the building it leases. In the short time that it has been open it has already established itself in the region as a unique and popular dining destination.
6. More than one-third of downtown's retailers and restaurants have been doing business in town for 25 years or more.
7. The spending power in the Westfield community is strong. Retailers evaluate a community's market potential before locating. The top 2 criteria for locating in an established community are foot traffic and overall accessibility followed by the spending power of the surrounding community. In December of 2016, The Star Ledger reported that Census data revealed "wide swaths of the Garden State remain slow to get back on their feet following the Great Recession. There are exceptions, of course. Urban-adjacent communities like Maplewood, Summit or Westfield have seen growth in most key

economic areas....” The Ledger also identified Westfield as one of “20 N.J. towns with the highest incomes”, showing an increase in median income of almost 4% from pre- to post-recession. (Westfield was the only town in Union County in the top 20.) In addition, Westfield was one of only 6 of the towns to register an increase in home values during the same time period.

8. Residents and commercial entities are investing heavily in their properties. In 2016, the value of construction in Westfield was over \$89 million.
9. Public projects that will have a positive impact on the downtown are moving forward. The restoration of the Mindowaskin Park pond is nearly completed. Other park improvements such as the installation of new walkways are planned to coincide with the park’s centennial celebration in 2018. The Town is in communication with the State of New Jersey to advance the process in reconfiguring the intersection of State Highway 28 (North Ave.) and Elm St. The Town has also engaged a traffic engineering consultant to design improvements to Parking Lot 7 (across from the Post Office) and the traffic grid that includes the intersection of Lenox Ave. and Central Ave.
10. Research shows there is a growing desire among Millennials and Seniors to live where they do not have to always rely on a car. Walkable downtowns like Westfield’s are desirable.
11. The entire Town Council and the Town’s professional staff, including the Town Planner who brings his experience and previous successes in Montclair and Asbury Park to the table, are fully committed to the goals of the Mayor’s Downtown Task Force.
12. The town is building on a very strong foundation and successful heritage. There are far more strengths than there are weaknesses and far more success stories than not.

## **The Task Force Gets to Work**

The first order of business for the Task Force was to clarify those areas that fall within the jurisdiction of the local government. Though the town cannot intercede in private business relationships such as that which exists between a landlord and business tenant, it can offer certain regulatory and design incentives, it can review land use ordinances and revise any outdated ones that may be preventing the town from changing with the times, in partnership with others it can consider ways to attract more people to the downtown, it can review development regulations that may be thwarting creative use or physical expansion of existing spaces, and it can nurture an environment to keep the town conducive to business.

The next order of business was to determine the most effective way to optimize the Task Force’s efforts and speed. Three subcommittees were formed so that maximum outreach and fact-finding could occur simultaneously.

In order for the Task Force to fully diagnose the current situation within the Downtown, it was important to first listen to the concerns, perceptions, interests, and suggestions of various stakeholders. The subcommittees met with residents, downtown landlords, merchants, restaurateurs, commercial real estate brokers, residential real estate brokers, and developers. In addition, Task Force members and Council representatives have received over 100 e-mails offering input from a variety of sources, including residents, former business owners, and current business owners.

Altogether, between the Task Force as a whole and the subcommittees, there have been approximately 15 meetings and numerous follow-up contacts.

In short, the Task Force has spent the last 8 months collecting data and soliciting input.

## Enthusiasm and Progress

There was much enthusiasm within the Task Force as well as from the stakeholders who participated. Overwhelmingly, the stakeholders were generous with their time and ideas. So much progress has been made that in keeping with the Mayor's charge, the Task Force is eager to see their efforts come to fruition sooner rather than later. Consequently, it was decided that this is the appropriate time to present the Initial Report incorporating the recommendations formulated to date to the Town Council for their consideration.



## Recommendations

The Task Force's recommendations fall within 7 major categories:

1. physical improvements
2. permitted uses
3. building height
4. signage
5. approval process
6. parking
7. other

Within each category, it was determined that certain recommendations may need additional research, deliberation, development, and/or capital funding. Inasmuch as the Mayor's charge is to expedite that which can be completed in the short term, 3 action timetables were created so that those items requiring more time to research, deliberate on, and develop do not hold up those which can be implemented sooner. The action timetables are near-term, mid-term, and long-term as they apply to each of the 7 categories. When reviewing, please keep in mind that certain recommendations may overlap categories.

# 1. Physical Improvements

The purpose of the walking audit effort is to take stock of existing conditions and to carefully survey the infrastructure and physical characteristics from multiple perspectives – visitors, current businesses, prospective businesses, developers, residents, property owners, and so on. Are there any physical additions or modifications that will add to the appeal of the downtown?

## For the Near-Term:

Consider:

- Instituting a pilot “parklet” program. The Task Force heard from stakeholders that there was a need for more meeting places. These places could be located within private establishments, but there was also a desire for additional opportunities for dining al fresco, or simply for smaller, public gathering spaces. One new technique which is gaining popularity is to provide additional public space in so-called “parklets”. Parklets are seasonal, temporary seating platforms placed flushed with the curb to create an extension of the sidewalk thereby providing additional social space for visitors of the downtown.
- Decorating the trees along Quimby and Elm Streets for a welcoming and festive feel.
- Enhancing existing downtown events to attract an influx of new visitors as well as ensure a steady flow of regular downtown patrons by, for example, closing Quimby Street for more than one “Sweet Sounds” Jazz Festival and closing Elm and Quimby Streets for the tree lighting ceremony.
- Renovating parking lot #7 (Central Avenue at Lenox Ave.), incorporating the portion of Lenox Avenue between Central Avenue and North Avenue into additional parking spaces and including new landscaping and seating areas.
- Converting Lenox Avenue to one-way traffic from Central Avenue to Elmer Street and adding angled parking on that section of roadway thereby increasing parking capacity.
- Providing a sense of more public space by removing nearly half of the on-street meter stanchions and replacing the single meter heads with upgraded double meter heads (See “Parking”) that have the added benefit of accepting more payment types.



- Plant appropriate species of trees in vacant tree wells.
- Add appropriate containers with lids for recyclables.

For the Long-Term:

Consider:

- Continue working with the State of New Jersey to secure NJDOT funding to re-design and re-align the intersection of North Avenue at Elm Street, modernize the traffic signals, and renovate Parking Lot #2.
- Creating and installing gateway features such as landscaping, signage, and public art to establish a greater sense of place.
- Completing a plan to improve linkages to and within downtown that does not rely on vehicular traffic (pedestrians, bicycles).
- Looking to create additional public spaces wherever possible and enhance existing spaces where possible.
- Updating and replacing existing wayfinding signage.
- Installing architecturally pleasing covered structures to house paystations as a means to provide shelter for users and to help make them easier to identify and locate.
- Replacing current bus shelters with architecturally pleasing structures that support WiFi and offer charging stations

## 2. Permitted Uses

Permitted land uses are deliberately designed to be consistent with the goals and objectives of the town's Master Plan. The Westfield Master Plan's goals and objectives for its business districts are as follows:

To maintain and enhance the viability of the various business districts by:

- a. encouraging an appropriate mix of land uses that will complement one another and meet the retail and service needs of the Town;
- b. promoting a desirable visual environment and preserving the small town atmosphere in the business districts;
- c. providing or requiring the provision of sufficient numbers of

parking and loading spaces in the appropriate locations to serve the needs of the general public as well as the needs of patrons and employees;

- d. promoting a desirable pedestrian environment in the downtown business district; and
- e. discouraging automobile-only oriented development in the central business district, including "strip malls".

Whereas all of these goals and objectives are equally important and interrelated, particular attention will be given to “encouraging an appropriate mix of land uses that will complement one another and meet the retail and service needs of the Town” in this section of this report.

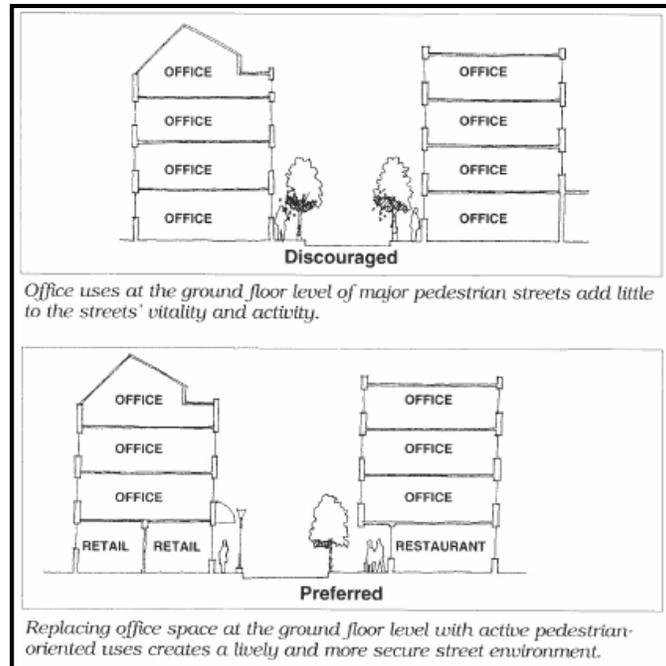
Although the largest, concentrated business district within Westfield, the CBD is certainly not the only area of Town zoned for commercial uses. Various zone districts including the GB-1, GB-2, and GB-3 Zone Districts permit types of uses which are also permitted within the CBD. These include retail sales, personal services (such as salons or fitness centers), restaurants, and offices.

Although these zone districts may allow for like uses, each district has its own distinct regulations which are meant to reflect and represent the existing character of each area. One such group of regulations relates to the so-called bulk requirements which include required building setbacks. The CBD and GB-1 Districts allow for the greatest massing of buildings and these districts have the least restrictive setback requirements. The GB-2 and GB-3 Zone Districts have more restrictive bulk requirements which are meant to help transition these commercial districts to adjoining residential uses.

Another group of regulations informs how each permitted use is treated. Within the CBD, office use is not permitted within ground floor space, whereas it is permitted to occupy the ground floor of the other commercial districts identified above. This regulation has generated significant discussion throughout the Downtown Task Force’s work. There have generally been two opinions on the subject. The first is that if this restriction on ground floor office use was removed, office tenants would quickly occupy vacant storefronts, bringing employees who need to eat and who would conduct discretionary shopping on lunch breaks and after hours thereby supporting other businesses within the CBD. In addition, these office spaces would draw clients who would also frequent downtown shops and restaurants.

Another opinion is that the CBD does not restrict these users from occupying space downtown, it only restricts office use to an upper floor of a building. In turn, the zoning still provides for the ability to reap the positive benefits that office employees and their clients bring. As part of this opinion is the thought that ground floor usage should remain available for those users which require a street presence, such as a retailer, personal service type of use, or restaurant. For example, retail shops tend to support one another and function best within a district when they are physically grouped together. When visitors “window-shop” the downtown,

and come across a grouping of non-retail uses, they may perceive it to be the end of the retail district, and interest may wane in proceeding further. In its publication “Planning for Transit-Friendly Land Use”, NJ Transit notes that, “Long Expanses of street-level office space without multiple entries or visual entries or visual interaction with the street create “dead zones” along pedestrian paths and should be discouraged.”



*Image Source: “Planning for Transit-Friendly Land Use,  
A Handbook for New Jersey Communities,  
NJ Transit, June 1994*

The 1992 Town Master Plan stated that, “the CBD zone is designed to encourage retail business use primarily, and office and residential use secondarily”. In 2002, the Town Master Plan had a similar description, with statements such as “The CBD zone district has historically been the heart of retail business development in Westfield, due in part to its close proximity to the passenger railroad stations and the compact, pedestrian-oriented shopping environment that exists.”; and, “The CBD zone is designed primarily for retail business use; however, office, service, entertainment and residential uses can support and complement retail use, and so should be permitted to have a secondary function in the zone. To promote this goal, retail sales, banks, entertainment and personal service uses should be the primary uses on the first floor of buildings. Offices and other services, along with residential apartments, should be limited to the upper floors of buildings.” The 2009 Master Plan Reexamination report did reaffirm the goals and objectives and the general principals underlying that plan. The 2009 Reexamination Report, did note however, that there were changes on the horizon. Stated as, “The Board supports the continued retail viability of the CBD Zone, and the uses currently permitted. Closer review of the permitted uses is warranted to provide support to the retail business community without distracting from its sidewalk appeal. Further consideration should be given to the allowance of certain retail services as permitted uses in the CBD and GB Zone Districts.”

Downtown Westfield is known as a destination, where one can find a variety of goods, dining opportunities, and services. These amenities are a key characteristic of what makes downtown desirable, and clearly helps play a role in the attractiveness of Westfield as a community as a whole. However, as market conditions and demographics change, it may be appropriate to adjust certain permitted uses in the downtown district. The key is to allow for economic growth in a manner which is true to the community's vision and goals, and does not do unnecessary harm to the long-term health or character of the CBD.

In light of the changing retail paradigm, and the growth of new types of businesses not considered when the zoning for the CBD was last revised, the Downtown Task Force is recommending a number of actions for consideration.

These include allowing for ground floor office use on those properties which have frontage on North or South Avenue. There are a number of reasons for this recommendation:

- Many of the buildings' sizes and character make their use as "cash register" types of retail impractical. For example, certain buildings are set back from the street, and some ground floors are elevated above street level. In addition, certain buildings may not have the typical "retail storefront" characterized by large windows and glass storefronts.



*Although these buildings have their primary entries along Elm Street, their North Avenue frontage may not be appealing to a retailer due to the lack of significantly sized window openings. It is suggested that buildings such as these with a North Avenue frontage can accommodate a ground floor office use without negatively impacting the retail "core" of the CBD.*



*South Avenue buildings within the CBD which are set back from the street make their use as “cash register” type of retail impractical. It is suggested that office uses would be appropriate in structures such as these.*

- There are “gaps” in the retail streetscape created by public parking areas; and along South Avenue, auto related uses.



*Gaps in the retail streetscape as a result of parking areas and auto related uses.*

- There are current ground floor office tenants with frontage on North and South Avenues.



*The above photograph illustrates a variety of elements which are generally not conducive to a downtown retail environment including gaps in street frontage and buildings set back from the street. In addition, the buildings shown in the above photograph are already occupied with ground floor office tenants.*

Due to the characteristics of portions of North and South Avenues as described above, it is felt that they can accommodate office uses and consequently supplement retail and service uses within the “core” of the CBD without negative impact to the overall character of the district.

The Downtown Task Force also recommends that the list of permitted uses within the CBD be made current by identifying new uses that are desirable and then being sure to allow for them. As such, a recommendation is to allow for a new category of permitted use within the CBD. This category can be considered “retail service”. Retail services could include those types of businesses which would provide a significant street presence as well as attract visitors to downtown. Examples of such uses include studios for instruction of the arts and martial arts, children’s play gyms, and even retro arcades. In addition, the Town should consider allowing for micro-breweries and craft-distilleries as a permitted conditional use. The State of New Jersey has made the licensing for such facilities an easier process, and as a result these industries have gained popularity in the State. Locally produced product could be an asset for the Town.

Other restrictions on use of space should be eliminated altogether. For example, currently the use of basement space for other than storage is prohibited. This restriction should be removed to allow for greater flexibility in the use of tenant spaces. Rooftop dining and or residential recreational space should be considered as this can provide a dining amenity currently lacking and such an amenity may set Westfield apart. Residential use of rooftops would provide additional outdoor space for downtown’s residents. However, the Downtown Task Force cautions that such rooftop uses could have a negative impact on surrounding properties and, therefore, recommends that specific restrictions or conditions be placed on rooftop use to mitigate negative impacts such as noise and light pollution.

The Downtown Task Force also recommends allowing for the temporary use of space with a permitted use on an interim basis without the need to meet parking requirements. Commonly referred to as “pop-up retail”, Allowance of this temporary use of space is designed to lead to a permanent use if the business is shown to be successful. The benefits include providing property owners with needed rental income, allowing for a business to test the market, and of course the filling of a vacant space. A strict limit on the duration of the use must be established so that any potential negative impacts of its use do not continue indefinitely.

For the Near-Term:

Consider:

- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to update the definition of “retail service” and include in that definition uses which will promote an active streetscape; be sure to allow for those types of retail service uses within the downtown. Such uses may include specialty entertainment, such as retro-arcades and paint-and-sip type establishments.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow microbreweries and craft distilleries with associated tasting rooms as a conditional use.

- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow for ground floor office use for properties with frontage along North Avenue and South Avenue within the Central Business District (CBD).
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to remove restrictions on use of basement space for only storage and other functions ancillary to a principal permitted use subject to the requirement that the basement use serve as an expansion of the ground floor tenant's approved use (i.e. the ground floor and basement tenants are one in the same).
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance by excluding basement level floor area from a calculation that habitable floor area devoted to residential use not exceed 2/3 of the total habitable floor area of the building.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow for the use of tenant space on a temporary basis without needing to comply with parking requirements.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow for shared use of tenant spaces which are too large for single tenants by different uses/users.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow use of rooftop areas, conditionally, along with a required Board review.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow walk-up windows.

For the Mid-Term:

Consider:

- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow for additional 1<sup>st</sup> floor office space in other areas of the CBD.

For the Long-Term:

Consider:

- Continually reviewing the list of permitted uses in the CBD to enable timely adaptations to market/demographic trends and potential new uses which are not envisioned presently.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow for hotels as a permitted principal or conditional use.

### 3. Building Height

Reasonable building height standards can serve to increase building functionality and enhance architectural details without sacrificing the overall appeal of the face of the downtown. Downtown Westfield is characterized primarily by two and three story buildings, yet there are also a number of single story buildings, most noticeably along Central Avenue. There are two, four story buildings downtown, the first being 66 Elm Street, and the second The Savannah at 111 Prospect Street.

The Westfield Land Use Ordinance currently allows a 3 story/40 foot maximum height limit. The Downtown Task Force heard from stakeholders that if the Town were to allow an additional story of height, additional residential units could be constructed and, therefore, additional clients and customers of downtown businesses would be provided.

When considering an allowable permitted height, factors such as the prevailing character of a neighborhood factor in. Also, building heights which are roughly the width of the street a building faces are generally seen as acceptable. Street widths downtown typically measure 40 to 50 feet. Following this formula, an additional permitted fourth story on buildings downtown may be acceptable, and is worthy of further consideration. To accommodate a fourth story, maximum permitted height in terms of the number of feet should be increased which would allow for taller ground floor and second floor floor-to-ceiling heights, allow for more elegantly proportioned storefronts, and provide the taller spaces that commercial users desire. For comparison purposes, the height of the Arcanum building is 51 feet to the top of the turret. The Savannah measures 48.5 feet from grade at the corner of the building nearest East Broad Street.



As buildings are renovated and new buildings are constructed, many seek to construct elevator bulkheads and staintowers on the roof. These building elements are typically exempted from height requirements to a certain degree as they usually only occupy a small percentage of rooftop, and if placed correctly on a rooftop have only a de minimis if any impact on the public realm. Westfield however, does not exempt these elements from height requirements to any degree. It is recommended that the Town provide a height exemption, which is common practice in zoning ordinances found in many communities.

Westfield's Land Use Ordinance does provide for a height exception for certain architectural elements if certain standards are met, such as requiring a setback from the wall of the building. However, it is recommended that the ordinance section which addresses these exceptions be revised comprehensively. The ordinance as written allows for the same height exceptions for not only architectural elements, but also mechanical equipment. It is recommended that these different types of items be treated separately, as each can have a very different visual impact.

Consider:

- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to exempt stair towers/elevator bulkheads from height requirements to a certain extent.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to clarify height exemptions for decorative architectural features on building.
- Assessing the desirability and impacts of a permitted fourth floor or mezzanine/penthouse level stepped back from the outer wall of a building, amending the Land Use Ordinance if acceptable.



## 4. Signage

Signage not only provides information about a particular business, it can also serve as a form of artistic expression that attracts customers and is pleasing to passersby. As such, signage can play a major role in shaping the image of a community and the character of its streetscape. The regulations contained within a well drafted sign ordinance will provide the opportunity to enhance Westfield's aesthetic appeal, while at the same time allowing for its businesses to be readily seen and identified.

During the meetings held, the Downtown Task Force heard from various stakeholders that the Westfield sign ordinance was too complicated and at times difficult to interpret. The sign ordinance itself is in fact a full 21 pages long. Also expressed was a desire to allow for the use of different types of signs in combination, such as the use of both a wall-mounted and window-glass sign for the same business establishment. In addition, concerns were raised in regard to how current sign regulations sometimes conflict with the architectural design of a storefront.

The Downtown Task Force recognizes that it is time for Westfield's sign ordinance to be the subject of a "complete overhaul" to make it user friendly and to ensure consistency with any current case law dealing with how signage can be regulated. Prior to completion of this comprehensive task, however, it is recommended that certain amendments be adopted in the near-term to address some immediate concerns with existing regulations, thereby providing additional options for businesses to advertise.

Consider:



- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow for A-frame/sandwich Board signs.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance by updating the allowable wall-mounted sign heights and dimensions.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to allow for window signage as a certain percentage of window area.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance for allowance and regulations of awning signage.

For the Mid-Term:

Consider:

- Assessing the desirability and impact of allowing projecting/blade signage, amending the Land Use Ordinance if acceptable.

For the Long-Term:

Consider:

- Rewriting the Sign Ordinance to incorporate all cross references in an effort to make it more user friendly.

## **5. Approval Process**

Land development and the construction and alteration of structures requires various permits and, in certain cases, the approval of the Planning Board (permitted uses) or the Board of Adjustment (non-permitted uses). Depending on the nature and extent of the work to be done, the process to receive approval in accordance with the Land Use Ordinance can require several steps and be time consuming. Both landlords and potential tenants have expressed concern over the length of time required as well as the cost associated with the approval process as is currently required by Westfield’s Land Use Ordinance when looking to open a new business in Town.

Some examples:

- A “modification of utilization” requires site plan approval from the Planning Board. As defined by our ordinance, a “modification of utilization” can be best described as a change of use of the space, for example, from a bank to a retail shop. A site plan review and approval is currently required by the Planning Board even when the new use is permitted by ordinance.

- Modifications to facades require a site plan review by the Planning Board. When an existing tenant space is modified, and that modification results in façade changes, such as new entranceways and storefront windows, a site plan review is necessary. This is required even if the use itself is permitted.

The ordinance should be amended to allow for a more streamlined process to eliminate the need for a formal site plan application and review in these instances. The resulting streamlined process can reduce the time and costs associated with opening new businesses, and would ultimately encourage new projects within the central business district as well as all areas of the Town.

#### For the Near-Term:

Consider:

- Amending the Land Use Ordinance to streamline approval process by updating what requires Site Plan Review.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance by supplementing façade regulations to ensure protection of attractive building facades and allowing for administrative review of façade modifications rather than a Site Plan application.

## 6. Parking

There are two distinct categories of parking matters. The first category (a) relates to private property owners and the requirements of the land use ordinance to provide parking for the building's occupant(s). The second category (b) relates to what most people equate with parking. That is, on-street parking and public parking lots. Both categories are covered here because each can have an effect on the other.

### **(a) Private Property**

Currently, the Land Use Ordinance provides the opportunity to request an administrative waiver from parking requirements within the CBD from the Zoning Officer, up to and including 5 parking spaces. The Ordinance also provides the opportunity to request a waiver from parking requirements within the CBD from the Site Plan Subcommittee of the Planning Board, up to and including 10 parking spaces. These provisions provide an option for a tenant who may have a parking deficiency to obtain an approval without needing to file a full variance application. These waivers are always granted, as providing the required parking on-site is often not possible, and at deficiencies of up to 10 spaces, it is anticipated that on-street and public parking lot spaces will be able to accommodate any additional demand created. To deny the waiver would result in a potential tenant not being able to fill a space, and potentially stifle growth of Downtown Westfield.

As the Site Plan Subcommittee of the Planning Board has always granted the waivers requested of up to 10 spaces, it is recommended that the ability to grant a waiver to this degree be handed to the Zoning Officer rather than have an applicant appear before the Site Plan Subcommittee, thereby streamlining the approval process. Consequently, it is recommended that the Site Plan Subcommittee of the Planning Board be permitted to grant a waiver from parking requirements of up to 20 spaces, above the 10 they are currently permitted to provide for. For deficiencies greater than 20 spaces, it is recommended that a variance application be made. Parking deficiencies to such a degree could have a significant impact on a particular site downtown, or even the downtown as a whole. A thorough vetting of the parking deficiency through the variance application review process would identify these impacts and find if there would be substantial detriment.

Beyond this recommendation, the Downtown Task Force recommends that additional parking strategies be examined and implemented to best make use of existing parking supply. These include a public valet parking system, and allowing for a “payment in lieu of” parking program, where fees could be paid into a fund dedicated to improving parking within the downtown rather than requiring the provision of an actual, physical parking space.

Additionally, existing parking requirements should be continually monitored to ensure that the ordinance does not require more parking than actual demand dictates. One strategy in this regard is commonly known as “shared parking”. Simply put, shared parking allows the use of a single parking space by different users at different times of the day or week. The shared parking concept works best when uses on a site have different times of peak parking demand, such as a building with a retail tenant (who typically has its peak parking demand during the daytime hours) and a residential tenant (who typically has a parking demand in the overnight hours). Requiring that an individual, separate parking space be constructed for both of these users actually results in an inflated parking requirement, and possibly even vacant spaces at certain times of the day or week.



### **(b) On-street parking and public parking lots**

Earlier, this report referenced Westfield’s “small town” feel. This is quite a tribute for a town with the population density (4,518 per square mile) and level of activity of Westfield. Consider that within a one mile radius of our downtown, there are 1,375 businesses employing nearly 9,000 employees, approximately 6,000 households, the train station with the highest ridership on the Raritan Valley line, a state highway, five county arterial thoroughfares, and

several churches and schools. In addition to the number of employees and residents rooted in and near the downtown, there is a constant flow of visitors, diners, shoppers, and people visiting professional offices going to and from the downtown. With such a heavy volume and demand, regulating the parking inventory is essential.

In managing its public parking inventory, the Town adheres to basic universal parking principles. Generally:

- On-street parking is premium — short-term access to destinations and turnover of spaces act as an engine for economic vitality.
- Mid-term (usually 4 hours) parking for shoppers, diners, movie goers, visitors and others in need of more than 2 hours are provided for in designated areas of 5 parking lots.
- Longer stays (up to 9 hours) are provided for in designated areas of 2 parking lots.
- Regular commuters may purchase parking permits to park in 3 designated commuter lots.
- Employees (or their employees) may purchase permits that provide special employee parking in designated lots and at designated underutilized on-street meters. Remember, if employees aren't walking, customers are.
- Long term parking (12 hours) is provided for in the commuter lots and adjacent to a commuter lot.
- Free parking is available after 10:00 a.m. in the permit spaces in Lot #3 (South Avenue Train lot); on Saturdays in Lots #6, #8, and Lot #3 at non-numbered, non-metered permit spots, and at orange bagged employee permit spaces on Orchard St., Elm St. and Ferris Place; and at all spaces on Sundays. The also Town offers free parking during select special events.

Parking at premium on-street meters costs 75 cents per hour. Payment is by coin (nickels, dimes, and quarters), tokens, and Smart Cards. There is a 15 minute free button that can be pushed when the meter displays zero.

Paystations in the parking lots and along South Avenue accept many forms of payment – bills (but no change given), credit cards, debit cards, Smart Cards, coins, token, and the parking APP. You may add time to your numbered space up to the allowable limit at any paystation. Parking in the non-permit (numbered) spaces costs 50 cents per hour.

**Keep in mind the number**

**2.5**

Enforcement of parking regulations is a necessary component of any parking system as it ensures that the system is being used as intended. Enforcement is the tool to assure that commuters are parked in commuter spots and not, for example, taking up spaces in front of stores for the entire day; that employees are parked in the designated perimeter areas so that shoppers and diners are able to park closer to the establishments they are frequenting; that the

areas around crosswalks are kept clear to eliminate line of sight issues and protect pedestrians; and so on.

Perhaps no other subject sparked more heated discussion than parking. Many residents, property owners, and business owners were unaware of free parking opportunities, the 15 minute free button on meters, and payment options, especially the Smart Card which has the advantage of adding unused time back onto the card. Enforcement was labeled as “aggressive”. The fact that the parking system user is the one in control as to whether or not a parking summons is issued fell on deaf ears. There was resistance to the notion that it is the user that must determine the time needed for their visit and pay accordingly (at a modest 75 or 50 cents per hour). There was the assumption that the Traffic Enforcement Officers have the ability to know if a car is parked for 5 minutes overtime or 1 hour overtime. (They do not.) A story was shared whereby a parent complained that her child received a parking summons while working downtown during the holiday season when parking was free. It was determined that the daughter had parked beyond the allowable time limit in a short-term space intended for shoppers, not employees. (Remember, if employees aren’t walking, customers are.) Some were under the impression that enforcement was merely a quick way for the Town to “make money”. (It is important to clarify that the Town brings in more revenue from those who comply with regulations than those who pay fines. In fact, the Town does not retain all the fines that it collects. Approximately 45% of the fines collected are sent to the County of Union and the State of New Jersey.)

In matters where there is ongoing controversy, it is often helpful to look elsewhere to gain a fresh perspective and determine if the problem is common in other communities. It appears that issues related to parking and parking enforcement are not exclusive to Westfield. Interestingly, the State of Oregon offers “A Guide to Managing Parking in Your Community”.

The Guide explains,

In every community, parking is a central, and often controversial issue.

As a city and its stakeholders plan for their town’s ongoing success, they must distinguish between perceptions and realities to develop and implement an effective parking management strategy.

The Guide also points out,

It’s been said that everyone is a parking expert. If you’ve driven a car and parked it, you probably have an opinion on parking. Despite an abundance of personal opinions, there is often little agreement on the purpose of parking on a specific street, in a lot ... or within the entire parking supply. Not all parking is created equal; certain parking spaces are best prioritized for specific users, such as shoppers....

# 2.5

Question: In a given year, what percentage of the parking system users receive a summons for a parking violation?

Answer: Contrary to the perception of “aggressive enforcement”, less than 2.5% of the users of the public parking facilities receive a parking summons. Or, put another way, 97.5% of the people who use the system do so without incident. With upwards of a million transactions per year, the 97.5% success rate is noteworthy.

Question: On average, how many parking summonses does each Traffic Enforcement Officer issue per hour?

Answer: The answer is a low 2.5 per hour.

Re-branding the Town’s parking system to debunk the damaging myths and placing the emphasis on the 97.5% success rate (rather than the 2.5%) as well as all of the convenience options would clearly be beneficial for the downtown.

## For the Near-Term:

Consider:

- Adjusting the parking enforcement time frame from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Upgrading and replacing on-street meter heads with double meter heads (See Physical Improvements) that can accept more payment type options.
- Amending the Land Use Ordinance by increasing the amount of increased deficiency of required parking spaces that can be granted by Zoning Officer and Site Plan Subcommittee.
- Designating at least 2 parking spaces on Quimby Street after 6:00 p.m. as 15 minute “pick up” spaces for those picking up take-out orders from downtown restaurants.
- Designing and distributing new parking maps and related information targeted to user groups. Conducting extended outreach and education to market the parking options available and the various payment methods available as well as debunk the counter-productive parking myths.

For the Mid-Term:

Consider:

- Establishing a system of graduated fines that meets the approval of the Courts whereby first time violators pay a smaller fine and repeat violators pay larger fines.
- Exploring the feasibility of a town-operated valet parking program in the evenings (6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.) utilizing select loading zones as drop off and pick up locations.
- Seeking the services of a professional parking consultant who will (1) assess the current system and make recommendations on how the existing parking inventory and facilities can be best utilized to optimize the parking supply and (2) offer proactive solutions to satisfy future needs.
- Establishing maximum parking time allowances in lots to prevent employees from occupying spaces all day long that are meant for shoppers and diners and to prevent “meter feeding”.

For the Long-Term:

Consider:

- Instituting a “payment in lieu of” program in cases where private business property owners cannot meet the parking requirements.
- Instituting a shared parking allowance when weekday uses are combined with evening and weekend uses in the same building.
- Examining on a continuous basis the need for parking in the age of Uber and Lyft and the coming of self-driving vehicles.
- Exploring public/private tiered parking and public tiered parking to provide additional parking availability that may be needed as a result of controlled development.
- Exploring the suitability of a gated/timed parking lot.

Recommendations that did not fall under the previous 6 categories are listed below.

### For the Near-Term:

Consider:

- Facilitating a partnership between ridesharing APPs such as Uber or Lyft and downtown businesses who are willing to offer a promotion to patrons who use the convenience of a rideshare service.
- Inasmuch as research suggests that nationally 70% of all consumer spending occurs after 6:00 p.m., and to take advantage of the pedestrian traffic from busy restaurants during evening hours, seeking consensus with retailers and service providers to consistently stay open one or more evenings per week – Westfield Wednesdays? Thrifty Thursdays? Why Wait for the Weekend (Thursday and Friday)?

### For the Mid-Term:

Consider:

- Requesting the DWC to revisit the 2014 Downtown Market Analysis and engage an appropriate firm to complete an updated analysis.

### For the Long-Term:

Consider:

- Following the results of property tax reduction incentive programs instituted in a few N.J. municipalities whereby a third party vendor applies discounts offered by merchants to a resident's property taxes (or a rebate is offered to non-residents) to determine if merchants are interested in participating.
- Keeping abreast of emerging technologies, particular the use of APPs, to take advantage of any opportunities for collaborative synergies.



# Inclusion

The Mayor made it clear early on in the process that all suggestions and ideas from any source be heard and considered. The Task Force received many comments, concerns, ideas, and suggestions. All were considered and most were incorporated into these recommendations. Only those that did not fall under the jurisdiction of the local government were excluded, such as tax incentives (tax policy is dictated at the state level), forcing landlords to reduce the rent, restricting the number of same type stores in a given zone, and assuming the role of commercial real estate broker (“filling the stores”).

Early on, there was an expectation that the Town would be directly “filling the stores”. The Task Force needed to clarify that the buildings housing the vacant storefronts are private property and not owned by the Town. Consequently, the property owner controls the property and selects the tenants. Property owners usually engage the services of a commercial real estate broker to work on their behalf. Below is a sampling of how a commercial broker represents and promotes a client/business owner.



**THE GOLDSTEIN GROUP**  
RETAIL. FOCUSED

2,592 SF - FOR LEASE

**WESTFIELD, NJ**  
**RANDAL'S SHOES**  
82 ELM STREET



**DEMOGRAPHICS**

	1 Mile	3 Mile	5 Mile
Population	17,096	105,405	346,710
Daytime Population	11,080	51,039	172,511
Households	6,089	39,000	125,357
Avg. HH Income	\$191,382	\$160,102	\$129,508

**RANDAL'S SHOES**

- Available Immediately
- Located in Highly Desirable Downtown Westfield
- Prime Retail Site at the Intersection of East Broad Street & Elm Street
- Nearby to NJ Transit Train Station
- Convenient Access to Route 22 and Garden State Parkway

**NEIGHBORING TENANTS**

- Ann Taylor
- Panera
- Cake Boss
- Williams & Sonoma
- Chipotle
- Starbucks
- Blue Mercury
- Chico's
- Lord & Taylor
- Jos. A. Bank
- Banana Republic
- Capital One
- Alex and Ani



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It is important to reiterate that the Town welcomes and often receives inquiries from prospective investors and business owners. The Mayor and town professionals often meet with interested parties to provide guidance. Further, the DWC plays an important role as a facilitator on behalf of the town and the downtown businesses.

The Task Force also fielded unsubstantiated rumors (such as the vacancies are caused by rent being too high and false claims that certain businesses are leaving) and some negativity (such as Downtown Westfield is tired). In this age of social media, it seems that rumors and hearsay travel faster and farther than facts. In order to keep an open mind and remain focused, the Task Force could not expend energy countering every rumor or false claim.



## **Thank You**

The Mayor's Downtown Task Force is appreciative of all the comments, concerns, ideas and suggestions it received in its first 8 months. All participants were united in a common passion, a love of Westfield, and a common cause, to see the Downtown remain vibrant.

## **Looking Ahead**

The Downtown Task Force is proud to present this report to the Mayor and Town Council. As you will see, it contains over 50 recommendations, many of which the Task Force believes can be accomplished in the near-term. The Task Force awaits the Council's decisions on the recommendations and stands ready to assist in advancing the effort as needed.

