

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## Montclair Township Council and Related Organizations

January 21, 2005

### STRATEGIC PLAN

#### Montclair Township Council and Related Organizations 2004 - 2006

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Councilor at Large

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2nd Ward Councilor

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3rd Ward Councilor

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4th Ward Councilor

The Montclair Township Council is pleased to present its Strategic Plan, outlining the steps that will guide us during our tenure in office. The plan is the result of several months of discussion and collaboration and brings together ideas and proposals from all sections of the community including the public schools, the Montclair Public Library and many of our boards, commissions, committees and non-profit partners. In essence, it is a road map for the Council's term, setting forth our values, priorities and specific objectives. As we move forward, this plan will be supplemented by additional dates, details and changes, as we adapt to new circumstances and opportunities. The plan is ambitious and far-reaching but this Council feels we have much to accomplish and we are willing to hold ourselves, and those who report to us, accountable for getting many things done on behalf of our residents.

We have provided as much specificity as possible and have also identified who is responsible for accomplishing and/or monitoring progress: The Township Council, the Township Manager, or the Council & Manager.

**Joseph Hartnett**  
Township Manager

**Linda Wanat**  
Township Clerk

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## Guiding Principles

1. We will work to provide municipal services quickly and efficiently, applying common sense, strict enforcement, accountability, effective communication, and evaluation, thus giving residents higher value for what they pay in taxes.
2. We value our many partnerships with Montclair's non-profit organizations. By strengthening and expanding our relationships with them, they can provide many essential services less expensively than the Township can.
3. We will improve communications at every level, especially between our residents and the Township's staff and officials. Encouraging regular input from citizens on service improvements and changes, while providing an effective response mechanism for complaints and inquiries, will significantly enhance our ability to educate the public about our policies and ordinances.
4. We value Montclair's economic, racial and social diversity and are concerned that long-time residents and less-affluent newcomers cannot afford to live here. We will make every effort to maintain diversity by controlling taxes at the municipal, school and county level, while seeking to preserve an adequate supply of affordable housing.
5. We will have a clear, achievable, and well thought-out Master Plan that will be the blueprint for Montclair for the next decade. Input from citizens representing every part of the township will be sought in the planning process.
6. We will support and expedite projects that improve the quality of life for Township residents such as adequate parking, continuing to rebuild our infrastructure, and the physical appearance of the township. And, with the same vigor, we will seek to enforce all code requirements.
7. We value our public schools as they represent many of the core values that we share. We will continue to support them while we seek new sources of revenue so we provide a high-quality education to every child without skyrocketing taxes.

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## **What's Been Accomplished in the First 6 Months**

### **July – December 2004**

This Council is proud of what has been done in a short amount of time; obviously many of these projects were “carry-overs” from the last Council that we have brought to completion and many are projects that our Manager has been working on since he joined us in late 2003.

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### **Planning & Development**

1. Demolition of the Hahne’s Building has begun. The key step was signing the Redevelopment Agreement with Herod for creation of the Crescent parking deck and construction of The Siena with 101 apartments (10% of which will be affordable), 38,000 square feet of new retail space and underground parking for 100 cars. The symbolism of finally applying the “wrecking ball” signaled our commitment to getting this long-delayed project moving forward
2. The Planning Board created the Master Plan Re-Examination Steering Committee to get an early start on this project that must be completed in 2006
3. The Bay Street Redevelopment Agreement was signed, granting the developer the right to construct a new 225 space commuter and resident parking deck and creation of 161 rental units, 10% of which will be reserved for at least 15 years for low and moderate income residents of Montclair
4. The courts resolved the status of the Marlboro Inn after our Council took action, and new market-rate housing is anticipated in 2005
5. Construction began on the five-story parking deck at Valley & Orange Roads, as a result of the public-private partnership between the Township and DCH Motors

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### **Budget & Finance**

1. Our new Chief of Police, responding to our request for control of expenses and more efficient use of our financial resources, eliminated two \$100,000+ positions
2. We eliminated the Deputy Manager and Director of Parks & Recreation positions
3. We adopted a proposal for a new insurance program with better coverage at a reduced cost and the potential for long-term, substantial savings
4. The process of undertaking a town-wide property revaluation has begun and a town-wide task force with 14 citizens has been created

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### **Municipal Services**

1. Planning began for a new system and schedule for garbage removal and bulk waste pickup that will substantially reduce overtime and resident confusion
2. A new Department of Administration, Code Enforcement & Environmental Affairs was created and placed under the Manager’s overall supervision
3. Converted Public Works into the Department of Community Services and moved the Parks Department into the expanded DCS
4. Procurement of both structural and environmental analyses of 10 public buildings was started and will be followed by the implementation of energy-efficient improvements and better facilities management

### **Public Safety**

1. Dedicated our new Firehouse on Pine Street, serving Montclair & Glen Ridge
2. Approved a Police Department reorganization plan that places more officers and supervisors “on the street”

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### **Quality of Life**

1. Completed renovations and upgrading of Canterbury and Nishuane Parks
2. Convinced New Jersey Transit to complete a major renovation of the Watchung Train Station which we will now seek a commercial tenant
3. Added new spruce trees in the Orange Road triangle
4. Undertook and/or supported beautification projects in the Upper Montclair Village Shopping District, among other locations
5. Submitted an application to the State for a grant to repair the erosion on the Orange Road section of Toney’s Brook

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### **Work with Our Volunteer Township Committees**

1. Established a Public Transportation Committee, Fair Valuation Task Force, Montclair Housing Commission, Capital Finance Committee, and Education Cabinet, and appointed nearly 75 new volunteers to these and other committees
2. Held our annual meeting with the leaders of our boards, commissions, non-profit partners, and advisory committees and recognized 25 long-time volunteers
3. Worked with the arts community, MEDC and others to create an Interim Arts Council that will be the our partner for implementation of the arts Master Plan

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### **Governance**

1. The Mayor helped establish the Change County Government Steering Committee and three multi-town task forces that focus on shared services agreements, takeover of county-run services in local municipalities, analysis of the county budgets and long-range proposals for reduction in the size of county government
2. Committed to review the Township’s Affirmative Action Policy and establish new goals for hiring and promoting staff, hiring consultants and purchasing
3. Established a town policy allowing the Township to remove funds from banks that are not meeting the credit and lending needs of residents

### **Parking & Transportation**

1. Advanced ordinances to address parking problems around MHS
2. Advanced recommendations for traffic calming initiatives in three high-traffic areas of Montclair and installed our first traffic calming measures
3. Advanced a proposal to design and plan a town-wide Way-Finding system
4. Advanced a proposal for a five-minute "grace period" at parking meters
5. Participated in development of a comprehensive pedestrian & bike safety proposal

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### **Communications**

1. Engaged a team of consultants to develop an integrated communications plan
2. Developed the first "Montclair Now" newsletter to be sent to every household
3. Developed a proposal for a new Communications Advisory Committee and the upgrading of the programming and technological quality of Channel 34
4. Began the upgrade of our Montclair website that will be the heart of our new integrated communications program
5. Committed to a pilot program that involves the taping and airing of Council conference meetings to give citizens a greater understanding of how the council functions and makes policy decisions

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### **Miscellaneous**

1. First Night Montclair was returned to the Town Center and was a huge success
2. With the support of the Board of Education, the Montclair Community Pre-K, and the Schumann Fund for New Jersey, the Montclair Early Childhood Council is being formed to encourage better coordination among all pre-kindergarten programs and establish the basis for creation of a long-range plan for programs and facilities

## **Going Forward**

### **Municipal Services**

While we provide our residents with a wide variety of services, including some not available in other towns, most are provided by Township staff and some by local non-profit organizations with whom we contract. These services must and will be provided in the most efficient, cost-effective manner possible, and result in a high level of resident satisfaction. We expect that our Manager will complete the major reorganization of staff and departments that he began in 2004 to achieve these goals and utilize state-of-the-art technology in every Township department.

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### **Goals for 2005**

#### **Council**

- Approve final design and financing for improvements to Montclair's three pools
- Proceed with plans to strengthen the Montclair Volunteer Ambulance Unit

#### **Manager**

- Implement changes regarding refuse pickup including simplified rules, and bulky waste pickup by appointment
- Implement a more aggressive recycling program to reduce garbage disposal costs
- Conduct a survey of all residents who purchased pool permits and advance the responses and recommendations to our Parks & Recreation Committee
- Complete all improvements at Mountainside, Tuers and Kaveny Parks
- Create more "user friendly" budget materials and presentations to increase citizen involvement with and understanding of our operating and capital budgets
- Implement a unified, on-line field scheduling system for Town and BOE facilities
- Create and communicate the details of a more effective "customer service" system for the resolution of citizens inquiries and complaints
- Explore the feasibility of a voluntary leaf-bagging project with residents in selected neighborhoods if the state postpones the storm water leaf-pickup mandate

#### **Council & Manager**

- Examine the feasibility of opening the Municipal Building one night a week to make it easier and more convenient for residents to receive services and conduct business with the Township
- Review existing shared services with other municipalities; identify potential partnerships to buy or sell services to reduce costs and generate new revenue
- Conduct meetings with local residents and user groups regarding township parks slated for improvements: Edgemont, Tuers, George Washington, & Mountainside
- Help establish "Friends of" groups at Edgemont and Tuers Parks
- Resolve our relationship with PAWS regarding our animal shelter and animal control services; solicit bids from other towns and non-profits to explore options
- Create a Shared Services Committee with Township, the BOE, Public Library, and Municipal Court representatives and residents to explore ways to maximize dollars and streamline services
- Reestablish one evening Municipal Court session weekly

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- Determine the feasibility of combining the parks and fields maintenance units within the Township and the Montclair Public Schools
  - Secure Green Acres funding for improvements to Edgemont & Washington Field
  - Enter into two new, shared services agreements with neighboring municipalities
  - Initiate a One-Stop, online service center making it faster and easier for residents to get permits, sign up for programs, and access other services
  - Adopt and utilize new sustainability initiatives

## Going Forward Communications

Montclair residents need to be fully informed as to what their municipal government has done and what it plans to do and our government officials need to constantly seek citizen feedback that can be used to improve our programs and responsiveness. The key to effective government is effective-two-way communication. Information about the policies, services, and plans of local government must be easily understood and accessible to all residents and the Township must take aggressive steps to upgrade its technical capacity to provide timely information and services, and get feedback.

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### Goals for 2005

#### Council

- Develop and implement a new programming plan for Channel 34
- Organize, tape and air public forums on affordable housing, bike and pedestrian friendly” improvements, environmental initiatives, etc.
- Create an overall Communications Advisory Committee that advises the Council and staff on a variety of issues regarding web-based, cable and other media

#### Manager

- Produce and distribute the first edition of a town-wide Municipal Newsletter
- Complete the upgrading of the Township’s website
- Tape and air the monthly conference meetings of the Township Council

#### Council & Manager

- Resolve the picture and sound-quality of programs aired on Channel 34
- Conduct quarterly meetings of the Education Cabinet where Township and Board of Education officials can address parking, playing field, shared services and other issues and communicate much more effectively throughout the year

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### Goals for 2006

#### Council

- Tape and air six public forums on topics including traffic calming, affordable housing, and other topics that may result in township policy initiatives

#### Manager

- Implement a system of sending letters to all new town residents in which they are advised of how and when to access town services, communication venues, etc.
- Initiate a notification process that informs residents when local projects and site plans are to be discussed by the Council or a board, committees or commission
- Produce and distribute a “plain language” description of ordinances, policies and procedures that affect the daily life of residents such as garbage, leaf collection, recycling, bulk waste, maintenance of curbs, parking, snow removal, etc.
- Create, post and maintain a website-based Calendar that lists all public meetings

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## **Going Forward**

### **Quality of Life**

Montclair is and will remain primarily a suburban, residential community. However, our location is uniquely situated in the midst of a major urban metropolitan center, which may give rise, on occasion, to a deterioration of the quality-of-life for many residents. Whether it is speeding, noise pollution, lack of parking, neighborhood values, excessive signage or other issues, Montclair is in danger of losing its suburban character unless we confront these issues with creative strategies and consistent enforcement.

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### **Goals for 2005**

#### **Manager**

- Review all Township ordinances/rules to reduce confusion and improve enforcement
- Improve code enforcement thoroughness and consistency by implementing a pro-active program, rather than having complaints set enforcement priorities
- Develop and support programs to reduce litter and improve cleanliness in our neighborhoods, parks and commercial areas
- Improve street signage including the design and installation of Welcome to Montclair signs at the north and south ends of town, on major access roads

#### **Council & Manager**

- Adopt and fund a “way finding” system of improved signage for facilities/parking
- Implement and monitor on street parking solutions for Montclair High School
- Design, fund and install the first “traffic calming” projects at pilot locations
- Adopt and implement “sustainability” recommendations regarding environmental- related policies governing purchasing, lighting, vehicle purchase, etc.
- Conduct six-month review of the new parking regulations near MHS

## **Going Forward**

### **Arts, Cultural & Business Development**

The arts have always been an important part of the life of social fabric Montclair's and they can and should be an even more important part of the economy of our township. To accomplish this and to provide the kind of support and coordination that individual artists and arts organizations need and desire, the Township needs to help build and support an arts organization that can be the Township's partner and a membership group for the arts community. At the same time, working through our Town Center Business Improvement District Corporation, the Montclair Economic Development Corporation, and the merchant organizations in every part of Montclair to support our local merchants, attract new business owners and improve every shopping district.

#### **Goals for 2005**

- Assess the feasibility and demand for an Entrepreneurial Training Program and Revolving Loan Fund that helps local residents, especially minorities and women, start local businesses
- Finalize the structure and enter into a multi-year contractual relationship with the Montclair Arts Council
- Continue to place art in public spaces throughout Montclair
- Work with the MEDC and others to start a Montclair Film Festival
- Co-Sponsor, with the MEDC and others, Downtown Saturday Night as part of a weekend-long Celebrate Montclair Festival

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## **Going Forward**

### **Council Oversight & Affirmative Action**

Our commitment to: a diverse workforce representing the Township's population; affirmative action in promoting, contracting and purchasing; and a progressive, welcoming atmosphere, will guide our work with the Township Manager in implementing our affirmative action ordinances and policies. Building on this commitment, we can strengthen our workforce by continuing to increase hiring, contracting, and purchasing opportunities for women and minority-owned firms. And, while Montclair is undergoing an explosion in construction and new development, we must make this a top priority not to lose a valuable opportunity and to give true meaning to the words in our affirmative action policies. We will also continue to create new volunteer committees to help us plan, adopt and implement important initiatives, enter into new contracts with local partners, amend ordinances and adopt new policies that improve our law enforcement efforts.

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### **Goals for 2005**

- Enforce our affirmative action policies with contractors and vendors
- With Township staff and our Civil Rights Commission, review Montclair's Affirmative Action Plan and adopt appropriate changes and new goals
- Develop training programs for major contractors on our policies
- Work to create "parity" in educational requirements for promotion to senior positions in our uniformed services
- Develop and implement a more effective evaluation process for those who directly report to the Township Council
- Review and adopt a Management Staffing plan including compensation
- Establish key objectives for the negotiation of new contracts with our labor unions
- Establish and appoint members of the Shared Services, Public Events, Capital Finance, Communications, & Facilities Committees and Human Services Council
- Review Early Childhood Council recommendations for pre-K enhancements
- Consider adoption of an ordinance that would allow the Municipal Court to impose community service for sentencing and hold adults financially responsible for repeat acts of vandalism by their children

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## **Going Forward**

### **Planning, Development & Preservation**

Montclair is a special place in many ways and one of its foremost characteristics is its physical beauty. The pressure to create more tax ratables and the demand for sites by builders must be tempered by a commitment to maintain the beauty of the township and all its neighborhoods. We will use “smart growth” to develop land-use strategies that conserve what is best in Montclair while advancing selected residential and commercial developments.

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#### **Goals for 2005**

##### **Council**

- Adopt new guidelines and policies regarding disposition and long-term use of Township and Board of Education-owned sites
- Adopt and implement Upper Montclair Historic District via HPC
- Reach a decision on what will be built on the former Hahne’s lot on Church Street

##### **Manager**

- Complete structural evaluation of all Township buildings and facilities
- Complete energy audit of all township buildings and facilities

##### **Council & Manager**

- Determine merchant/owner interest in Upper Montclair Village historic district
- Construction of the Crescent parking deck is started and completed
- Begin to implement the new Parking Master Plan, with town staff, the Parking Authority and the Parking Advisory Committee.
- With the Planning Board, approve redevelopment plans for five Town Center sites
- Work with the South End Merchants Association to advance a proposal for streetscape, parking and other improvements

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#### **Goals for 2006**

##### **Council**

- Determine if additional residential preservation protections should be adopted
- Identify and develop preservation guidelines for targeted residential, mixed-use and commercial properties

##### **Council & Manager**

- Master Plan Steering Committee makes its recommendations
- Approve the Master Plan Report and send to the State
- The Bay Street parking deck is completed and opened
- Construction of The Siena begins on the former Hahne’s Site

## **Going Forward**

### **Housing**

Contributing to the diversity of Montclair is the mix of housing types from mansions to low-income rental units and everything in-between. Due to taxes and the incredible popularity of our town that has caused such an escalation in housing prices, living here has become a challenge for many people: young couples, seniors, students and others with low-to-moderate income. To continue to provide opportunities for people at various economic levels, we must continue to preserve our stock of rental housing and create new, affordable housing for owners and renters.

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### **Goals for 2005**

#### **Council**

- Review and approve the Housing Commissions' 2005 goals and priorities
- Increase the required contributions to affordable housing via the Developer's Fee
- Develop a proposal to create and capitalize an Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- Begin review of our policies regarding "accessory units" in private homes and consider other zoning changes to permit more affordable housing units
- Negotiate increased affordable housing agreements (more units or financial contributions) with all those developing new housing in Montclair

#### **Council & Manager**

- Establish a housing services contract with HOME Corp
- Consider a Certificate of Occupancy process that monitors property owners' adherence to our building code
- Strengthen enforcement of Planning and Zoning Board approval stipulations
- Survey and publicize available funding sources for low and moderate-income homeowners and tenants, and development/rehabilitation of affordable units

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## **Going Forward**

### **Infrastructure & Capital Spending**

Maintaining the Township's infrastructure, our roads, curbs, parks, sewers, water supply, schools and other public buildings, etc. is essential to maintaining our quality-of-life, a good bond rating, and avoiding costly repairs and emergencies. Much has been done in the past decade in this regard and we will continue a well-planned capital improvement program while keeping a close watch on the size of the Capital Budgets of the Township, Public Schools and Library.

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#### **Goals for 2005**

##### **Council & Manager**

- Approve bonding for the construction of the new elementary school
- Work with the Capital Finance Committee and conduct a cost/benefit analysis of accelerating street, curb and sewer replacement programs
- Review the proposed scope of work and the capital budget relating to expansion of the Bellevue Avenue branch of the Library
- Complete the final recommended improvements at two township parks
- Secure new Green Acres funding for improvements at three other parks
- Add handicapped-access recreation equipment in at least one playground
- Determine if we need to undertake capital improvements in other public building including our Public Works Building, Town Hall, etc.
- Survey county, state and federal funding sources for infrastructure improvements
- See that the expansion of Bradford Elementary School is completed

## **Going Forward**

### **Education, Services and Facilities for Youth, Seniors, and Disabled Residents**

A community can fairly be judged on how well it serves its youngest and oldest citizens. Montclair has long had a reputation for quality programs and services for seniors and youths but we can do more, while we focus new attention on residents with disabilities. We also have one of the most diverse and respected magnet school systems in the country that attracts families of every racial, religious and economic background. We must build on the district's strengths while partnering with the Board of Education to address challenges including class size and elimination of the achievement gap, and expanded early childhood programs and options.

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### **Goals for 2005**

#### **Council**

- Establish Human Services Council and advance a list of priorities for youths, seniors those with disabilities and other special-needs populations
- Continue to support the Montclair Community Pre-K program
- Help the Board of Ed secure renewal of the minority student achievement grant

#### **Manager**

- Install "full access" playground equipment in at least one park

#### **Council & Manager**

- Assist the Montclair Neighborhood Development Corporation, Million Man Montclair and other organizations in locating space for proposed youth and community center facility
- Resolve our financial commitment to Day Nurseries
- Work with the Early Childhood Council and the Board of Education to complete a long-range plan for Pre-K and other early childhood needs throughout Montclair
- Construct and open the Montclair Skate Park facility
- Working with citizen advisory committees, survey and publicize available sources of funding and other resources that will help them serve their target populations
- Working with township staff, advisory committees and local non-profits, issue final recommendations regarding development of enhanced youth and community center facilities and programs

## **Going Forward**

### **Parking & Transportation**

Because of its attractiveness as a suburban community with the diversity of people, services, arts and cultural options, Montclair has been a focal point for new development. With development, and the limited intra-town transportation options we currently have, comes additional parking, traffic and access problems. Although we can't solve every problem we must have a coordinated approach to alleviating them and reducing congestion in residential and commercial areas.

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#### **Goals for 2005**

##### **Council**

- Adopt MHS parking ordinances that "sunset" by June of 2006
- Public Transportation Committee suggests commuter train and bus service improvements to New Jersey Transit and De Camp Bus Lines
- Lobby for Federal Railway Administration approval of a 24-hour Quiet Zone
- Implement a five-minute "grace period" at parking meters in commercial areas

##### **Manager**

- Township Engineer makes final recommendations to Council on first phase of "traffic calming" initiatives at selected locations and in all business districts
- Complete the Upper Montclair and Watchung Plaza Bus Shelter projects

##### **Council & Manager**

- Montclair Parking Authority completes improvements to the Fullerton Deck
- Construction of the Bay Street parking deck begins
- Begin work on a parking study and remediation plan for all public schools and other township facilities such as Woodman Field
- MEDC completes planning and design work for a "wayfinding system" and the Town Council makes a final decision on this project
- Open and make the Crescent Deck fully operational

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#### **Goals for 2006**

- Complete a parking Master Plan that addresses on and off-street issues, in conjunction with the Parking Authority & the Parking Advisory Committee
- Determine the feasibility of starting an intra-town Shuttle Service, in conjunction with the Public Transportation Committee
- Determine the need for additional parking decks, especially in Upper Montclair

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## **Going Forward**

### **Taxes & County Government**

Taxes are necessary for the proper running of local government. However, they should be apportioned fairly and evenly, according to the ability to pay. Unfortunately, New Jersey has provided its local municipalities with only one means of collecting revenue – a regressive property tax. Our Township is also challenged by a school funding formula that fails to recognize the special needs and challenges in our diverse student population. This Council is committed to reducing the Township's real property tax burden with every means at its disposal.

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### **Goals for 2005**

#### **Council**

- Limit increases in the Township & Library budgets to the rate of inflation
- Keep Board of Education increases within the state-mandated cap of 2.5%
- Continue to work with the Township Manager on plans to streamline the delivery of services to reduce costs
- Establish three multi-town task forces under the Change County Government Steering Committee to focus on the county budgets and debt, transferring selected county services to municipalities, and considering long-term recommendations to achieve a substantial reduction in the size, cost and impact of county government
- Fair Valuation Task Force begins its work on the town-wide revaluation
- Begin work on the schools' budget by beginning the work of the Board of School Estimate months ahead of the normal schedule
- Adopt and implement recommendations of the Shared Services Committee for consolidation of overlapping services, outsourcing of selected expenses/services and other changes to reduce operating budgets of the Township/BOE & Library
- Support the movement to convene a State Constitutional Convention to address property tax reform
- Identify and implement strategies to increase state and federal funding of our public schools, including legal action