



Honorable Mayor & Council
Washington Borough
100 Belvidere Avenue
Washington, NJ 07882

March 31, 2008

Dear Honorable Mayor & Council,

The Washington Business Improvement District (WBID), its volunteer Board of Directors, Executive Director and staff are proud of the accomplishments of the WBID.

The WBID was formed in 2003, as a 501c3 non-profit organization according to the Special Improvement District Legislation in the State of New Jersey. Washington Borough Council agreed to form the WBID at the request of the Special Improvement District Steering Committee.

Opponents of the plan to form the WBID saw it as another burden on overtaxed, over-regulated New Jersey businesses. Many business and community leaders said that more bureaucracy and assessments were what we did not need. The Steering Committee assured those opponents of the WBID that what we were attempting to do was different; businesses would have an independent corporation directed by a business-oriented Board of Directors who would be their voice. The WBID would provide an organization that would work with Borough Council as partners to resolve important community issues.

Today, as the Borough Council's partner, we want to present our accomplishments to date:

- **“Welcome to Washington” Signage**

The “Welcome to Washington” sign at the intersections of Highway 57 & Route 31 was completed by the WBID for \$15,000. If the Borough had followed through with the engineer's estimate and quote received, the cost would have been in excess of \$54,000. The final sign completed by the WBID is a substantial savings of \$39,000. This does not take into account that prior to the inception of the WBID the Borough incurred a design expense of \$12,000; just \$3000 less than the WBID cost of the entire project. Originally, the DPW was to maintain this site; however the WBID has

paid for all maintenance expenses \$3,500 annually. In addition, we have also replaced the two old and dilapidated signs on Route 31. The seasonal banners depicting our logo add to the aesthetics. These signs and banners truly were the beginning of creating our “Hometown Friendly” image.

- **WBID Grant Programs**

We have created and financed four highly successful programs which involved reinvesting capital into a few of our oldest buildings. The best example of our Facade Program was the financial assistance of a \$20,000 loan to the Washington Antique Center. The Curbside Appeal Program has allowed businesses to improve signage and storefronts. In addition, our Business Incentive Grant and Special Needs Programs funded the Washington Theatre for a total of \$7,500 along with help for other businesses.

- **Streetscape Grant**

Our grant writer was responsible for receiving in excess of \$1.4 million for the streetscape grant. This has turned into a tremendous improvement in the overall aesthetics and pedestrian circulation in the downtown. This “new look” for the borough has begun to pay off as there is a renewed interest in downtown properties by businesses and developers. Bob Goltz, Warren County Chamber President & CEO, was quoted saying that “Washington is the talk of the county and drawing a lot of attention outside the county.”

- **Town Clock**

As part of the streetscape project, the WBID has purchased and installed a turn of the century replica Clock for \$23,500. Due to budget constraints, the WBID undertook the fundraising task of selling pavers and engraved plaques to complete the amenities portion of the original streetscape plans.

- **Surveillance Systems**

The WBID funded the \$13,400 purchase of 2 surveillance systems. Once installed, they will be donated to the Police Department. We believe that these surveillance systems will be a tremendous aid in police protection without an increase cost for payroll or health insurance.

- **Washington Business Development**

The WBID has invested in a strong public relations campaign to promote Washington. We believe that as a result of our PR campaign, the general public perception of Washington is changing. The Borough is beginning to be perceived as a good place for business. The following are examples:

The WBID assisted Mark Mulligan to lease 100% of the first floor. The former Arthur Alexander Law office was extensively renovated by the new owner and now houses his consulting business.

A new and important redevelopment project is the Midtown Limited, a 16,000 square foot office/retail complex with 48 market rate condominiums. The Midtown Limited site was formerly occupied by 4 older buildings with an assessed value of \$600,000.

The WBID, acting as liaison with developer Jack Van Cleef and Borough leadership, was able to facilitate the project's ultimate approval. This project will be of tremendous fiscal value. The ratable value of the completed project is estimated to be approximately \$8 million, and will generate over \$394,000 in 5 years. When the PILOT is complete, normal taxes will generate \$49,297 per year, a \$44,000 increase.

- **Sign Ordinance Amendments**

The WBID developed a unified sign ordinance consistent with a turn of the century theme throughout the shopping district. These new amendments will soon be adopted by Council.

- **Special Projects**

The WBID played a major role in ameliorating a dangerous and unsightly building which existed in excess of 5 years at 258 E. Washington Avenue. This property, at the entrance to the Borough was a constant source of consternation for neighboring residents and businesses. The WBID contacted the lien holder and accelerated the foreclosure and sale of the property. The house is currently under renovation, and will generate \$1,760 in Borough taxes this year.

The WBID was concerned about the operation of our sewer plant and its capacity. We believe that redevelopment is very important to our mission and a driving force to redevelopment is sewer capacity. The WBID commissioned Dr. Frank Mangravite of Public Works Management to undertake a sewer operations study on behalf of the Borough. We believed that it was important to get the study started as quickly as possible. While the Borough concurred, they needed to wait until the next fiscal year due to budget constraints. The WBID was able to step in and fund the initial study and report. This study uncovered several issues in the operation and maintenance of the plant. This report pointed out that the Borough was paying for repairs since 2005 for which it was not responsible. These costs are estimated to be excess of \$77,000. These funds can now be used for other improvements to our sewer system.

- **Maintenance**

We have also employed, since our inception, a part time employee to clean and help maintain the main shopping district. This includes all Borough parking lots and areas along nearby side streets. In addition, we had invested \$6,500 to sealcoat the parking lots in 2005. This has prolonged the life of the asphalt surface of each lot at no cost to the Borough.

- **Special Events**

Events are a way to create awareness of Washington Borough, and are a good way to generate foot traffic in the shopping district. With that goal in mind, we began to create several events that we believe draw both attention and people in the Borough and in nearby locations. Since our first Car Show in June 2004, we have continued to draw visitors to Washington at this annual event.

We added an even larger annual event in 2006 that has turned out to be the premier event for the region. The Festival in the Borough has attracted thousands of people to Washington Borough. Three stages of music, one having a family focus, along with a hundred or more vendors lining the main streets, creates a great deal of foot traffic and a positive sense of community.

We have added an annual Arts & Crafts Fair plus several other smaller yearly events. In addition to those annual events, we offer two other weekly events. One of the weekly events is Warren County's only Farmer's Market. With its prime location and through the tremendous support of the local media with front-page coverage, the Friday Farmer's Market has truly taken off. Its reputation attracts shoppers not only from our town and others in Warren County, but from many in Morris County, Hunterdon County, and Eastern Pennsylvania who drive through the Route 57 corridor. The WBID's other weekly event that draws good support is the Thursday Cruise Night where car enthusiasts drive their special car to Port Murray Auto Sales.

- **Annual WBID Awards Banquet**

The annual WBID Awards Banquet was created to support and recognize our local merchants.

- **Public Relations and Media**

One of the WBID's goals was to create a new and positive perception of Washington as a great place to live, locate a business and work. This has been accomplished through several methods: 1) We have collaborated with the Skylands New Jersey Tourism Council to advertise on the back cover of their magazine for events throughout the region. This four-color piece is distributed throughout all membership locations and at every event that Skylands Tourism attends. 2) Most recently, we have collaborated with the local newspapers, radio and TV. Through media partnerships we have been able to promote some of our businesses through Comcast Newsmakers and in news stories in a variety of print from the local Messenger, Warren Reporter, Express-Times, Hunterdon Democrat and Star-Ledger. Continued collaboration with the above organizations and media will continue to maintain and even improve the new prosperous "Hometown Friendly" image of Washington Borough.

In conclusion, the WBID has never kept score of our many accomplishments. We have focused on our work and have put all of our efforts into our tasks rather than advertise or politicize our accomplishments. Perhaps this was a mistake. Some members of the community have complained that the WBID has accomplished little or nothing. However, this letter is merely an outline of our many accomplishments.

The WBID Board of Directors understands that a Business Improvement District is a new concept and represents a change to business as usual in the Borough. The WBID is a great asset to Washington Borough. If we work together in the spirit of partnership and respect, then much can be accomplished.

Sincerely,

Washington Borough Business Improvement District Executive Committee