

# Bloomfield Life

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## Bloomfield Center committee reveals several options for more parking

By Al Sullivan  
Staff Writer

**BLOOMFIELD**—To give the Township Council some idea about what is being considered for improving parking in the center of town, the Bloomfield Center Steering Committee appeared at a council caucus meeting on May 26 with nine proposals currently under consideration.

Donald R. Smartt, of The Community Advocates, a firm hired to provide some options for the business community, said the committee has focused on parking as a primary force behind bringing more businesses and customers to the center.

The committee has consulted with the chief of police and the township engineer on the various proposals.

"One of the most urgent issues is parking," said Rick Hathaway, a member of the committee. "So we took a walk through town with the chief of police and Lt. Daniel Flanagan, scouring the area and looking for suggestions. What we came up with are almost costless adjustments that could provide additional parking."

Some possible areas for increasing parking include:

- The township could eliminate outdated curb cuts, such as the one on Orange Street near Hill Street, that used to lead to driveways but for a number of reasons no longer do.
- Confusing signs often discourage people from parking and thus shopping in the area. In several areas, the committee found signs that said both one-hour parking and no parking at any time. The township could make it easier for shoppers by eliminating those confusing signs.
- The committee also recommended improving parking regulations and enforcement. In that regard, they asked the council about the possibility of ceasing street cleaning on Mondays and Tuesdays for areas around the center, saying that the three-hour parking prohibition that is needed to accommodate the cleaning cuts deeply into existing parking space. Hathaway suggested that the merchants might find a way to provide for the service without such a drastic loss of parking space twice a week.
- The committee also noted that there were varying sizes in parking spaces, and recommended making them uniform, reducing the size of the overly large spaces to make room for more parking. Smartt said the committee looked at three areas for reduction as a sample and found a reduction would increase parking in those areas by 10 percent.

- Some no parking areas may be too large, the committee found, and the township should consider reducing their size to provide more spaces near the center of town. Two areas the committee noted are on Glenwood Avenue and on Bloomfield Avenue near the Garden State Parkway.

- By providing designated areas for employee parking, many spaces on the street could be freed for potential customer use. The committee said one company is already talking about such a lot for the area around Orange Street. Other such parking lots might be available, though the purchase of land would require some expenditure by the township.

- Since several of the blocks along Bloomfield Avenue at the center of town are long, the committee recommended providing mid-block access to parking areas such as at Farrand Street or Henry Street.

Smartt said the suggestions are being investigated for possible implementation and that the committee was simply updating the council, not seeking approval for any plans. The committee will look over the parking situation for another 60 days and then return to the council, perhaps with a more concrete proposal.

A key area for the upgrading of Bloomfield Center has been the renovation of the former Leo Building, 2 Broad St., at Bloomfield Avenue. Smartt said that if that building—which once served as the symbol of Bloomfield's prosperity—could be rented again, it would help to attract other businesses to Bloomfield. But Smartt said the key to renting that building is to provide parking for the site.

Earlier this year, students from the New Jersey Institute of Technology joined with Bloomfield business leaders to develop a parking plan for the area bounded by Bloomfield Avenue, Broad and Liberty streets.

The plan, which is a project by NJIT's School of Architecture, will be presented from 6-9 p.m. on June 17 at Bloomfield College. In developing the proposal, students were asked to look for ways to create more parking, developing a realistic, feasible plan that takes into account the overall impact on the business district.

In a related matter, the Bloomfield Center Steering Committee unveiled its design for the first of four sets of banners to be hung at various locations in Bloomfield Center. The committee is now looking for people to sponsor the banners. The committee plans to hang the 100 banners from poles in the township in an effort to enhance the area's appeal to shoppers.



Don Smartt and The Community Advocates