

MONTCLAIR BREAD CO., STUDIO MONTCLAIR COMING TO UPPER MONTCLAIR

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The Township Zoning Board of Adjustment approved plans on Wednesday night that will permit Montclair Bread Co. and Studio Montclair to open outlets at the former Warner Communications building on Lorraine Avenue. Montclair architect Paul Sionas presented a rendering of how the two businesses, a coffee bar and a gallery, will be situated at the building. COURTESY OF PAUL SIONAS

By LINDA MOSS

moss@montclairlocal.news

Montclair Bread Co. and Studio Montclair Inc. are opening up shop in Upper Montclair, sharing space on the first floor of the former Warner Communications building.

The Township Zoning Board of Adjustment on Wednesday night granted the approvals necessary for the popular bakery to open a small coffee bar or kiosk at the site at 237-249 Lorraine Ave., and for Studio Montclair to open a gallery at that property.

Montclair Bread Co. — seeking to grow beyond its retail shop on Walnut Street and wholesale bakery at the former Motor Vehicle inspection station on Label Street — has been scouting for other locations in Montclair, said Rachel Crampsey, owner and head baker for the business. She and RitaMarie Cimini, president of Studio Montclair, both attended the zoning board meeting.

“We’ve been looking to expand,” Crampsey said after the zoning board granted its approval. “The business has grown.”

The coffee bar on Lorraine Avenue will be similar to Montclair Bread Co.’s L-shaped space on Walnut Street, according to Crampsey, and will serve as a “grab-and-go” location for coffee, espresso and items such as pastries.

“Did they bring muffins?” zoning board member Susan Baggs asked during the meeting,

sparking laughter from the attendees.

Crampsey said that she hopes to have the location open in January.

Earlier this month Studio Montclair, an artist-membership group that is celebrating its 20th anniversary, announced that it had signed a lease for 1,000 square feet at [The Montclarion at Bay Street Station](#), 127 Bloomfield Ave. But the nonprofit also wanted gallery space in a high visibility area, which is why it decided to also rent on Lorraine Avenue.

Cimini said that Studio Montclair can use the additional Upper Montclair location not only as a gallery but to promote its events on Bloomfield Avenue. It also plans to take advantage of some of the multi-purpose space available on the first floor of the Lorraine Avenue building.

Both Montclair Bread Co. and Studio Montclair will be subtenants. Keller Williams NJ Metro Group will retain space in the back of first floor, roughly a third of the entire floor for a reception area, as well as lease the entire second floor of the building, which is owned by developer Michael Pavel.

[Keller Williams NJ came to the zoning board](#) earlier this year seeking a variance to rent half of the first floor of the former Warner Communications building, which has been vacant for some time, in addition to the second floor.

The real estate firm is now located in the rear of a Bloomfield Avenue shopping strip, which also has a Panera and 7-Eleven, but Keller Williams NJ operating partner Julie Corbo said she wanted a prominent street-level presence in Upper Montclair to draw clients.

Rachel Crampsey, left, owner of Montclair Bread Co., RitaMarie Cimini, president of Montclair Studio Inc., and Julie Corbo, operating partner of Keller Williams NJ Metro Group, will all have space on the first floor of the former Warner Communications building. They all attended the Township Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting on Wednesday night. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

But under township ordinances real estate firms are not permitted on the first-floor in commercial zones, with the logic being that they don't attract foot traffic to area businesses. And **the zoning board in August** did balk at permitting Keller Williams NJ to take a large, prominent space on the first floor, denying the application.

But it indicated it would be amendable to allowing the real estate firm to take less space on the first floor, and then Corbo's attorney, Alan Trembulak, came back with the revised plan.

At one hearing Corbo testified that Keller Williams NJ was active in the community and a major sponsor of Studio Montclair.

On Wednesday Montclair architect Paul Sionas showed the zoning board renderings of the new floor plan and how Montclair Bread Co. and Studio Montclair would be situated on the first floor, with one on one side and one on the other.

Sionas was instrumental in getting Montclair Bread Co. to come to Lorraine Avenue. He said he was aware of a Keller Williams office in Pittsburgh that also had a very successful coffee franchise, prompting him to reach out to Crampsey regarding Lorraine Avenue.

"I think it's a good symbiotic relationship, and it's all based on the board comments from the August meeting," Sionas said.

Commuters walking to or from the Upper Montclair train station can grab a cup of java and a muffin or other food item at the coffee bar, Trembulak said.

"I think we complied with the spirit and the intent of the zoning ordinance, which is to provide interest, activity, retail personal-service uses on the first floor," Trembulak told

the zoning board. "The board has recognized that this is not the most attractive location for retail given its location on the fringe, around the corner from Valley Road and sort of isolated by itself."

Several zoning board members agreed with Trembulak that the two first-floor tenants will create activity that will benefit the Upper Montclair business district.

But the zoning board raised objections, and wanted modifications, to the signage proposed for the building. The signs for both Montclair Bread Co. and Studio Montclair also included Keller Williams' name.

"I've never seen so many Keller Williams signs in my entire life," board member Joseph Fleischer said. "I'm going to start with that. Is there such an entity as Studio Montclair at Keller Williams? I don't think such an entity exists, does it? ... There's too much Keller Williams."

And Board Chairman William Harrison suggested that Montclair Bread Co. have a couple of tables and some seating for its patrons.

"Some kind of seating area adds to the feeling that this is a coffee bar ... So I think that will be helpful," he said.

REDEEMER RULING

In other action at its meeting, the zoning board granted final site plan approval for Redeemer Church of Montclair to proceed with an expansion. After listening to input from the board and neighboring residents, the church revised its plans and reduced the size of the two-story addition that it will be constructing behind its house of worship on North Willow Street.

Testifying for Redeemer, Sionas said that that the building coverage had been reduced, with the width reduced by 18 feet. In addition, there will now be a six-foot-high wooden fence on part of the property; rolling gates to close off the addition's parking lot when church services are done; and concrete pavers at the entrance driveway rather than asphalt.

Because the addition has been downsized, church amenities such as its adult-reading room and counseling room will be located in its basement.

This summer **Redeemer filed an application** with the zoning board that outlined its plans to demolish a house adjacent to its site on North Willow Street to make way for a two-story addition. The 2 1/2-story residential building and garage now houses the church's administrative offices.

The Township Zoning Board of Adjustment on Wednesday night approved a revised site plan for an addition to Redeemer Montclair, which reduced the size of the new building. A rendering of the amended plan was displayed at the board's meeting. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

The proposed addition will have a full basement, and contain administrative offices, class rooms and meeting rooms for the church, according to the application filed with the zoning board on behalf of Redeemer Montclair by attorney Trembulak, who represents the church.

But by August residents who live near the church **gathered names on a petition** opposing the variances that Redeemer was seeking. The petition claimed that the proposed site plan was "extremely massive," "projects significant growth" and will have "a critical adverse effect on adjoining residential properties' rights to quality of life."

Redeemer subsequently amended its amended its site plan.

But on Wednesday Trembulak lost his request for Redeemer to have permission to host events by nonprofits at its expansion. Harrison said he didn't think such a last-minute

approval would be fair to neighbors who attended prior hearings on the church's application.