



**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees: Rick Kearns - City Planning Dept.
Michiel Wackers - City Planning Dept.
Janis Astor delValle - Green Street Arts
Center
Izzy Greenburg - NEAT
Cookie Qunones - NEAT
Vin Amato - Local Retailer
Community Health - Invited
Salvation Army - Invited
Bill Cranshaw - VHB
Matt Blume - VHB
Ryan Malloy - VHB

Date/Time: April 18, 2007
9:00 AM

Project No.: VHB: 41290
State Project No: 82-297

Place: City Hall
245 deKoven Drive

Re: Middletown CBD Parking and
Traffic Study –
Stakeholder Meeting

Notes taken by: MCB / RM

A Stakeholder Meeting was held for the Middletown Parking and Traffic Study for the CBD on April 18, 2007 at 9:00 AM in Room 208 of the Middletown City Hall. The purpose of this meeting was to describe the project to the stakeholders, discuss current deficiencies and anticipated needs, and to brainstorm potential solutions.

The stakeholders at this meeting generally represent the area north of Washington Street. This area contains substantial low- and moderate-income housing, hosts several social services agencies, and is economically disadvantaged compared to other sections of the project study area.

The meeting began by each representative describing their organization.

Green Street Arts Center

The Green Street Arts Center is a project of Wesleyan University created in collaboration with the City of Middletown and the North End Action Team. It is affiliated with the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts, a nationwide association of non-profit community schools of the arts founded in 1937.

Since opening in 2005, the Green Street Arts Center has been offering a broad spectrum of arts classes, workshops and programming for adults, teens, children and families. The Green Street Arts Center has served more than 8,500 people, including residents, community members, adults, children and families from the city of Middletown, surrounding towns and the greater Middletown region.

Serving as a place for community gathering and celebration, Green Street is an anchor for the revitalization efforts currently underway in Middletown's North End.

- The Green Street Art Center receives funding from Wesleyan University, CDBG, foundations, and small grants. They are also looking for state funding to supplement their \$550,000 operating expenses.
- People come from over 26 towns including Danbury & Reading. Significant out of town demand requires significant parking supply.
- Parking is available in a city lot adjacent to the facility. In addition there is another lot across Green Street, however parking is limited in both locations. Parking on-street is sparse. Other local parking is utilized by the Community Health Center with reserved spaces.
- Operating hours for the facility are generally 9:00 am until 9:00 pm. There is a home school program for children being home schooled, there are also senior classes held throughout the day. Adult programming takes place on nights and weekends. There is also an after school program with children bused from the local schools. Sixty-one children arrive at 3:00 for after school program.
- Programming generally runs from 1 to 3 hours.
- Volunteers from Wesleyan and local high schools assist staff by helping kids with homework in the afternoon.
- Organizations rent space. Parking limits the facilities ability to reach out to other organizations, and is the biggest deterrent for someone looking at the facility. For example, due to the lack of parking, the CT Commission on Culture & Tourism is no longer conducting workshops. The lack of parking is hindering the Center's ability to be financially self-sustaining
- The space acts as the area's community space. The North End Action Team (NEAT) also holds their meetings at this location.
- Liberty Street is the furthest south that additional parking will assist this facility.
- There are architects looking into designing a streetscape signage/archway - entry way into Green Street. An architect from Wesleyan is working on this. Lighting is also being looked reviewed.
- A security guard has been hired to walk the area at peak times. The guard walks Green Street and parking lots, buildings - helps with perception. There is a good relationship with MPD and criminal activity is down from last summer.

North End Action Team (NEAT)

- The North End Action Team (NEAT) is a neighborhood organization that began in 1997 to develop grassroots leadership in the North End. NEAT is made up of residents, business leaders, property owners, and stakeholder groups. NEAT's mission is to provide neighborhood-based participation and leadership, to identify concerns, define strategies, and develop resources to improve the quality of life in the North End.
- NEAT has historically been focused on deKoven Drive to Main Street and Washington Street to Ferry / Green Streets, but have expanded with their success.
- Focusing on Main Street retail, NEAT is conducting a parking count survey. They also make sure that area businesses are communicating and are cohesive.

General Discussion

- Transit:
 - The transit system has limited destinations in Hartford and does not go to elementary school.
 - People in this area generally use cabs.
 - A trolley connecting arts venue could attract many patrons to the area. An example is the "Bronx trolley", a rubber wheeled trolley connecting arts organizations. Another example is the CF Buttonwoods Trolley, and the Denver Trolley.
 - A large garage with downtown circulator was suggested. Hartford has the Star shuttle, there is one in New Haven as well.
 - Bike infrastructure is lacking - angle parking is a problem. Can not ride on sidewalks, unsafe on streets. A designated bike lane was suggested.
- Traffic:
 - Congestion is prevalent near the church
 - Grand Street backs up due to Main Street.
 - Traffic congestion begins after 3:00 pm due to access to Route 9.
 - People avoid left from Washington Street and utilize local roads including Grand Street and Spring Street. This has detracted from these neighborhoods as no one wants to live on Grand Street due to the traffic. The results are increased rental on Grand Street.
 - Congestion at Spring Street and Main Street.
 - Making Grand Street one-way was suggested, as a couple with Liberty Street.
 - Misalignment at Grand Street is a problem.

- Route 9 north and Portland connection is a problem.
- Parking
 - The Warfside housing development eliminated two public parking lots, totaling 60 spaces. This adversely impacted some businesses. It also eliminated off-street parking options for older housing units that do not have their own off-street parking.
 - Monthly parking in City lots was cited as a problem due to the displacement of short-term parking options. It was suggested to move monthly parkers to a central location with a circulator.
 - There are a large number of residents north of Washington Street who need overnight parking. There are a lot of transitional residents on the 2nd story of Main Street north of Washington.
 - Have a greenway along river deKoven Drive is underutilized. Currently biking is not encouraged.
 - Discussion of the Rail Property took place as a potential parking location, as was the rear of the Salvation Army Building.
 - Potentially putting meters on deKoven Drive was discussed.
- Pedestrian:
 - North east corner of the study area (on Main Street) is very vibrant. However, poor pedestrian connectivity exists to that area from off-street parking. There is no way to cross to Little Tibet.
 - There is a crossing guard at mid block north of Washington Street.
 - Additional access, and improved access, to Main Street from Green Street Arts Center was discussed.