



**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees: Gary Nagler, Inn at Middletown
Jennifer Alexander, Kid City
Frank Sumpter, YMCA
Rick Kearney, City Planning
A. Meyers, Russell Library
Harry Every, Middlesex Hospital
Vincent Amato, local retailer
Bill Cranshaw, VHB
Matt Blume, VHB

Date/ Time: April 23, 2007
10:00 AM

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

Place: Municipal Building Room 208
245 deKoven Drive
Middletown, CT 06457

Re: Middletown CBD Parking and
Traffic Study –
Stakeholder Meeting

Notes taken by: MCB

A Stakeholder Meeting was held for the Middletown Parking and Traffic Study for the CBD on April 23, 2007 at 3:30 PM 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 institutions in the southern project area as well as Kid City and Amato's in the center of the study area.

Inn at Middletown:

- Gary Nagler described the number one Guest Service issue is parking, which has come out through surveys of guests. They have capacity to valet park 15-20 cars behind property, but they direct people to park on-street.
- The facility can accommodate significantly more people than can be accommodated with the existing parking supply in the area. There is concern for groups over 80 or 90 people due to parking limitations.
- Additional parking within a block or two needed to remedy this.
- There is no overnight parking on-street and Inn visitors get ticketed when they park there.
- Majority of visitors do not want to use valet service and want to park themselves.
- Metro Square (private shopping plaza) can't be used.
- 25 spots in Middletown Mutual garage. Employees park there during peak times, but is too far away to be utilized by patrons.

Kid City Children's Museum:

- The vast majority of visitors to the museum are from out of town. Visitors at the museum are typically 5% from Middletown 95% from out of town, therefore most require parking.
- A concern that the museum has for the downtown in general is that the parking lots behind Kid City are 2 hour parking only. The average visit to Kid City is 1.5-2 hours so parents can't walk downtown without moving their car, and if parents go through the effort of putting their children in car seats they are just going to leave the area.
- Employees of other businesses downtown park behind the museum.
- Holiday shopping season the museum is very slow, which allows capacity for the shopping peak.

YMCA:

- The YMCA has recreational programs and serve approximately 400 people per day during the week. The peak hours of operation are from 4:00 – 6:00 PM when up to 200 people are using the facility. There is a severe lack of parking during that period. In addition, the YMCA has 62 units of men's residences which are full. One third of these men have cars. The YMCA also has a day care program with 45 children, which only require short term "drop off" parking. Primary turnover for day care and children's programming is 7:00 AM – 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM, and people double park during these times. The majority of the YMCA's membership is within a 12 minute drive from the facility.
- The YMCA has 250 employees, 75 of which can be expected in the building at any given time during the day.
- There currently is a drive through bank on the YMCA property which is planned for demolition (the project still requires P&Z approval). Approximately 35 parking spaces will be gained.

Russell Library:

- Russell Library is located at the intersection of Broad Street at Court Street and services approximately 1,000 people per day, with 30,000 to 45,000 registered users. Last year there were an average of 976 visitors to the library per day. The library functions with three general peaks, an early AM peak, a noon peak, and an after school peak. In recent years, the library has had to cut their operating hours back due to budget constraints, but continues to be open during the morning. Computer usage is high with a large computer center, and the library is undergoing renovations, the most recent is the children's center renovation which is just beginning.
- There are two buildings owned by the library, and parking is located across the street in a public lot. However, more public parking is needed. In addition, parking in the garage is validated from the library.
- The library does not get complaints about metered parking, and visits to the library are typically less than two hours. When the library runs programs, those are also less than two hours.
- Employee parking is currently a problem, with employees parking on-street on or around Pearl Street.
- There used to be a 15 minute parking space in the vicinity of the front door, however, the Middletown Police Department removed it citing vehicular safety concerns.

- Many people coming to the library have other interaction with the downtown and use the local restaurants, legal services, insurance companies, and others. Adults are likely to drop children off at the library and then go shopping downtown.

Middlesex Memorial Hospital:

- Middlesex Hospital is a major employer in the City with approximately 1,000 employees during the day. In addition they have a significant number of patients, visitors, and doctors.
- Parking is provided both on-site and off-site with on-site priority given to patients and visitors. Management and staff with over 10 years of employment at the hospital also can park on-site. Satisfaction surveys at the hospital indicate that parking is a concern for users.
- The hospital runs a private shuttle system that runs to and from the Middlesex Mutual garage as well as the Elks Club from 6:30 AM – 9:30 AM and 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM. All other times require a call for pickup, and a security guard provides the transfer. The hospital is currently negotiating for additional leased spaces at the Middlesex Mutual garage. In order to entice usage, the hospital used to give free lunches to those using the Middlesex mutual garage, which is no longer done as this is now considered prime parking.
- The hospital has a great need to consolidate parking into the future and is willing to invest if they can get employee parking. Up to 200 to 300 parking spaces could be filled if offered. The hospital has investigated on-site parking garages but due to site layout it is not feasible. Any addition to the existing garage would require army corps approval.
- The hospital is currently undergoing an expansion project which will increase parking by 69 spaces. In addition, a 20 space parking lot was recently constructed on Crescent Street.
- In the past the hospital approached the City to construct a parking facility at Hubbard Park but couldn't obtain development rights.

General Discussion

- If there was a garage in southern Middletown, who would it serve
 - Hospital
 - YMCA
 - The Inn
 - Regional employees
- The Air rights over Rivers Edge was discussed. The Air rights are just one module nearest to deKovan Drive. Relocating the air rights to adjacent to the Middletown Press was discussed. This could potentially provide 200 ground and 200 deck parking spaces. Pedestrian connection to downtown would be necessary.
- Could angle parking be added to Union Street due to its width?
- Main Street, Court Street and Broad Street are the usual spots for parking.
- Parking spaces near Amato's is busy.
- Could a deck be added between the library and Pedal Power?
- Is there potential for parking behind or in place of the Salvation Army?
- It was noted that the second floors North of Washington Street are busy.
- It was noted that Mellili Plaza is commonly filled. Also, due to the existing hours of operation, it is easy to wait until the agent leaves to get free parking.

- The lower level of the Arcarde Deck is in poor condition with detracts from its use.
- If a garage was to be constructed, the first level should be designed higher than the current layout to make it feel more comfortable.
- Pedestrian cross walks were recently revised to concurrent walks. This was repealed and exclusive walks were re-installed due to citizens complaints. It was noted that this could have been due to the lengthy crossing distance across Main Street.
- Individual facilities have excellent signage, the only problem is once the destination is located, it is very difficult to find a parking lot, especially for smaller businesses.
- Employees and long-term parkers should be encouraged to park off of Main Street.
- It was noted that there was an article in New York Times suggesting making on-street spaces more expensive to balances the use of off-street lots (based on an LA study).
- If employees were to park remotely there would have to be a reliable shuttle system in place. Employees don't want to wait for trolley, so there needs to be quickly accessible short headways.
- Should there be incentives for residents who live in very close proximity to the downtown and work here? "You are Home" program.
- ConnDOT's Route 9/17 project was discussed to determine its impacts to southern Middletown. It was suggested that deKovan Drive will get busy, as will Main Street and Cresant Street. This plan makes wayfinding more difficult and signage will be very important. The Bridge Street access/crossing of Route 9 should be reviewed as it is very dangerous.

Operations and Management:

- Enforcement needs to be consistent, including time restrictions (those parked in two hour spaces all day)
- If we are going to subsidize parking need to control it.
- Should the parking lots be managed privately?
- Should the Parking Authority be stand-alone? The parking authority was put in place by a state statute. Should fees and fines go to the general fund or to a parking fund for infrastructure construction and maintenance.
- It was suggested that if Metro Square was decked, it could be full all the time.
- What would the function of garage be? Employee, visitor and resident parking was discussed.
- How will the future expansion of Middletown impact parking needs?
 - New parking and future expansion should have synergy.
 - Anticipate riverfront development should be considered.
 - Metro Square, in its current management state is under-utilized.
 - Hospital may knock down 80/90 South Main Street to rebuild in long term future.
 - The hospital is also looking to move administrative functions to a remote location to decompress the hospital's core.
- Could the use of eminent domain to build a garage in the vicinity of the hospital solve the parking problems in southern portion of the study area?

- Security would be needed for any structure.
- Who is parking downtown early? Should the parking ban on-street be extended until 9:00 AM to force employees to park off-street?
- In place of the former Bob's location should retail in front and parking in the rear be considered?
- Connectivity between the museum lot with lot across from the library and with the downtown is poor.
- A deck over the library lot to the museum was suggested.