



**Meeting
Notes**

Attendees: Vincent Amato, Amatos,
Jennifer Alexander, Kid City Museum
Gary Nagler, Inn at Middletown
Peter Harding, Harding Dev. Group
Gregory Sneed, Middletown Police Dept.
Bill Warner, Middletown Planning Dept.
Marc Romanow, Middletown Press
Bill Russo, Middletown Police Dept.
Michiel Wacker, Middletown Planning
Welles Guilimarten, Middletown Parking Authority
Richard Kearney, Middletown Planning Dept.
Marie Kalita-Leary, Downtown Business District
Tom Fonel, Middlefield Corporation
Bill Cranshaw, VHB
Matt Blume, VHB
Ryan Malloy, VHB

Date/ April 25, 2007
Time: 8:30 AM

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

Place: 505 Main Street
Middletown, CT 06457

Re: Downtown Business District
Stateholder Meeting

Notes taken MCB/RM
by:

A Stakeholder Meeting was held for the Downtown Business District (DBD) on April 25, 2007 at 8:30 AM at 505 Main Street. 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 represent the downtown businesses, public safety and the parking authority. The following highlights the key points discussed:

The DBD voted to table all DBD items and talk about parking for the duration of this meeting. The meeting began by the Downtown Business District describing their organization.

- The DBD is a Special services taxing district that raises funds to promote businesses and do own projects. The primary membership is from 505 Main Street (one building south of Salvation Army) at its northern limit south to the Inn at Middletown. There is scattered participation in north. There are 232 members and they have been in operation for 6 or 7 years. The DBD has a budget of \$130,000 per year which is used to hire guides, plant flowers, give directions, clean up garbage, fund the cruise night. They work with the police department on issues. They also implemented a program where guides would put a nickel into parking meters and leave a small informational card with the automobile.

- VHB described the federal earmark which is in three separate pools of money. There is about \$8 million from Federal Highway Authority (FHWA) for parking listed to replace a garage. There is about 1.25 million from Federal Transportation Authority (FTA) for an Intermodal station or improvements. The third pool is approximately 9.5 million from FTA for transportation related improvements.
- VHB discussed the Local/City Share of the financing:
 - The federal money is 80% of share.
 - Local share is 20% - could be State funds. Local does not have to be cash based on Federal legislation.
 - The hospital willing to participate with cash and can create a revenue stream to the parking authority.
 - It was noted that the value of Arcade garage is over one million dollars.
- It will likely take three years to get something under construction. The environmental process is thorough and therefore requires significant effort.

The members of the DBD were then asked about their perspectives of parking in the downtown:

Midfield:

- Parking in the center core is a problem. Main Street market, and other properties have vacancies because of lack of parking. The downtown is competing as a suburban environment that has city problems. Tenants of buildings want easily accessible parking and are willing to pay. It is important to note that free parking is available in the suburbs, which is the downtowns competition.
- There are parking needs across the City (north, central, and south).
- Many buy their own parking by knocking down buildings to pave a surface lot.
- Is there potential to realign streets to add parking.

Parking Authority:

- Central area is the worst. Parking stall dimensions should be reviewed. Wells believes the stalls are inefficiently striped.

Middletown Press:

- Both the YMCA and the Inn at Middletown use their lot, and they don't want to throw people out, however, the situation has got worse over last ten years. It is to the point where there is concern for Middletown press' evening shift employees as they are unable to park near the building. It was noted that having a parking problem is a good scenario as it shows that the downtown is being utilized.
- Parking is need in all three areas (north, central, and southern). This parking should be as close to Main Street as possible, and most people are in favor of pocket parking through out the city.

Inn at Middletown:

- Customers of the Inn at Middletown typically want to park on site. In customer surveys, the biggest complaint is always parking. The Inn is leasing 25 spaces from the Middlesex Mutual Garage but the customers don't want to walk that distance. The Inn has problems accommodating daytime meetings.

Riverview:

- Believes that the parking can be rectified, but the solution may require removal of building lots. Parking must be close to, on, or just behind Main Street. The Center Core of Downtown Middletown is very important. Many small lots are needed. The Midfield Garage is only 99 steps away from the downtown and is underutilized.

Amatos:

- A major problem is that the parking authority has lost its power and no longer has control. It is important to rebuild the Parking Authority and have money go to a parking fund and not the general fund. Middletown government has caused the problem by giving away 1,000 parking spaces in the 1980s. Scattered employee parking is required as employees won't walk a significant distance.

Liberty Bank:

- Liberty Bank has a daily shortage for on-site parking for customers, so employees park in the Midfield garage. There is a need for a common place for business employees to park (Central employee parking). It would be nice if the meters could be paid with a card.
- Parking should be behind buildings and walkways should be provided.
- Destination shopping is growing, and scattered parking for customers should be provided.
- There needs to be something to encourage people to walk the corridor.

Main Street Market:

- Action with regard to parking needs to take place as soon as possible, and the problems here can't wait for the construction of this project. If people leave due to parking, they won't come back. Short-term recommendations are important.
- It is a benefit for economic vitality to have employees of the large employers walking in the downtown. It would be convenient if employees could be parked in a single lot. Would like to have employees "walk", but a dedicated transportation for employees may be needed.
- If you get a ticket while shopping it should be set up so businesses can "validate" the ticket.
- Parking for the evening peak is tight, and there is a lack of signage.
- Need to look to future for meters.

Parking Authority:

- We should use Middletown's topography to our advantage. Deck on Kid City Museum or Middletown Press seems like good places.
- SNET building parking lot is downhill and use hill as advantage for deck design.
- Park over Middletown Press or over a roadway such as Rapallo, or others.

Parking Ideas:

- Hubbard park is a good location for the hospital and YMCA to park.
- Air rights exist over the Rivers Edge lot to deKovan Drive currently exist. If the air rights could be relocated to the western portion of the lot there is an opportunity to include Middletown Press, YMCA, Inn, hospital and shoppers.
- Is there an opportunity to deck over SNET lot. It would encourage walking through the Historical Society property.
- It is rare to see retail customers at the current garage.
- If a parking garage is constructed, it needs to have an open feeling with high ceilings.
- Customers won't park in Middlesex Mutual, and it is anticipated that the Middlesex Mutual building will be at capacity in 1 to 2 years.
- There is a need for businesses along pedestrian walkways to and from parking garages. Street and landscaping on pedestrian walk ways will be an important design aspect.
- Need businesses to face Arcade garage. Is it possible to expand over the police department lot? Is there any benefit to turning that property into a surface lot?
- Behind Middletown Area Transit (MAT), is there an opportunity to take out the theater and improve bus circulation.
- Is there an opportunity to deck the library lot to Kid City Museum?
- Mellili Plaza, is there an opportunity for a multi-level deck which will allow the city lot to be returned for development. Millili Plaza should be straight and further from Main Street. No retail on Mass Mutual side which causes a barrier. Do we get rid of small lots and build retail?
- Can transit money be spent on circulation improvements? Can the Capital Theater be removed for parking and bus circulation? Can the Capital lobby be used as a walkway?
- Kid City Museum block. Landscape Holy Trinity driveways even if it were just cobble stone with removable bollards for church "events" the library lot area is also a good place for improvements.
- Liberty Street development will add parking.
- North end parking needs are residential and employee based.
- Can parking be added on deKovan Drive?
- Pearl Street or South Green Street are un-metered (500 spaces) could generate more revenue - even if the meters were long-term.
- The Salvation Army can be a good location for additional parking
- The Wharfside project will contain about 130 spaces and should be self contained for parking needs.
- There are a lack of spaces on the eastern block between Route 66 and Ferry Street. Many residences were constructed without driveways.
- Metro Square can a deck be built at Main Street level, with parking below?