

PARKER HARDING PLAZA: Comments from recent Charrette on 08-22-2023

KSW: 09-06-2023

Count	Submitted On	Message
1	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Have water fountains along the pathway
2	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Removing the entrance to the library parking below will create crowding and backup of traffic leaving the library and the Levitt
3	8/22/23 9:00 PM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why are we not building the deck @ Baldwin? 2. UPS cannot deliver prior to 10 am. I asked so this is a no-go. 3. Why is Imperial Lot not being the next priority if you want employee parking there? 4. Parking should be at an angle and one way. 5. There should be an out in the middle as now to help circulate. 6. Why not build out over the river for "green space" instead of taking parking? 7. I have seen the lot full with one open space so cars <u>can</u> fit in the current striping. 8. I appreciate adding the access lane - we need more parking.
4	8/22/23 9:00 PM	I'm not in favor of removing the lower lot Jesup Green spaces and placing them up above by the police station! You'll remove mature trees. Replanting new trees does not make up for the removal of mature old trees.
5	8/22/23 9:00 PM	The waterfront is a "gem". Will there be benches, tables, etc., to encourage people to sit, relax, read, enjoy lunch, etc? (didn't see it in the concept drawings but may be in the plan?)
6	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Please make sure trash compactors are designed to accommodate full recycling for businesses - NOT JUST cardboard boxes, but compost/food scrap collection also an idea.
7	8/22/23 9:00 PM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A tiered lot for employers and employees would be a good idea. Imperial Ave is too far away and unsafe. 2. 3-hour parking will destroy businesses; better to have paid parking with app (phones). 3. Garbage is only on one side of a very large parking lot. 4. This will be very dysfunctional. 5. The two way road only works when no one is parking.
8	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Great presentation. It would be very helpful to have daily and hourly studies of the number of empty spaces. When there are many empty spaces, by definition, "parking" isn't a problem. This would allow people to focus on the problematic days and times and get a better sense at the impact and trade-offs.
9	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Please consider putting a speed bump or hump just prior to turning into the parking lot off the Post Road. I walk a lot downtown & have almost been hit several times walking from Starbucks across to riverwalk, now.....
10	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Right-of-way making left from one-way cut though back into 2-way parking lot needs to be clearly marked. Otherwise in support with addition of reinstatement of cut though road.
11	8/22/23 9:00 PM	I feel your Aug 22 plan is a good compromise.
12	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Incorporate how to address traffic and dangerous crosswalk between Parker Harding & Library.
13	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Thank you for your openness and thoughtfulness. Dispense with the cut-though road. How many people use it, especially if you can expand the main road without it. It doesn't add parking and reduces riverfront green space.
14	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Maintain basic Parker Harding configuration to conserve the cut-though road and, to the extent possible, the extant parking. Restore pavement, replace landscaping as needed, and stop....
15	8/22/23 9:00 PM	<p>I appreciate the reconnecting to the river and greenway, However...</p> <p>The proposal creates issues that do not have adequate solutions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Loss of number of parking spots in Parker Harding, Baldwin, and Jesup lots. 2. Plus dealing with (?) and handicap needs. 3. The handling of traffic diversion with the elimination of the pass though road.

16	8/22/23 9:00 PM	2-way traffic + parking will be an accident waiting to happen. Best to keep 1-way parking + add 1/2 way exits back. Like the exit road added back.
17	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Let's do it! More green - more sustainable!
18	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Could the garden in the new plan be canterlevered over the river? That way the road leading to the Post Rd could be put back.
19	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Keep the access road where it is. Request the USPS restore the mailbox to its former road facing position.
20	8/22/23 9:00 PM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tiered parking deck. 2. No 2-way center roadway with parking on both sides. 3. Longer duration delivery zones. 4. Alternative to parking time limits. 5. People come to the district to shop, eat, receive medical, aesthetics, and other services. Not to take in the river.
21	8/22/23 9:00 PM	This is a solution looking for a problem. The two biggest problems in downtown are traffic & lack of parking. This doesn't address one and worsens the other. All of this expense & effort to expand, say, a few feet, the sidewalk and add a strip of grass that has no practical use?! We need to be able to walk safely and/or ride our bikes, especially in Coleytown. We need a solution for that.
22	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Connect the boardwalk on the west bank with the existing bridge by Gorham Island - allows walking around the river vs current "dead ends." This was Arthur Tauck's vision when he renovated west side of river in the 90s and put in wide boardwalk on that side. Also nice for access for residents in new apartments going in on west side.
23	8/22/23 9:00 PM	What's the plan for the existing trees? Are you cutting them down? If you plan to plant new ones, you have to include \$ in the budget for feeding & watering or they will die under our current drought conditions. Many of the new plantings around town haven't made it though the year because there's no money in the budget for feeding & watering.
24	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Town already doesn't have enough parking. The continued building of more apartments along the Post Road in Westport and in Norwalk makes it even harder to find a parking space. Maybe somewhere a 2-level parking garage should be created in a "safe" place.
25	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Like that cut through road is on the plan. Maximize parking by removing the green space.
26	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Is the roadway necessary? Could we get more parking or riverfront access if cars just drove through the lot? Will the roadway be designed for bikes to share the road? Or will bikes be in the same flow as cars?
27	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Is the strip-prison-building being funded by CT State? It's not planned is it?
28	8/22/23 9:00 PM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get rid of green space 2. Add more parking 3. Done! <p>If we were losing 10 spots this wouldn't be an issue!</p>
29	8/22/23 9:00 PM	<p>CONCERN: No loading zone. Removal of the ONLY cut through road to Route 1 for trucks will cause major congestion.</p> <p>IDEA: Why can't the Town and Police implement an "experimental" enforcement of this first using cones and road blocks to really see in real time what will happen over a month long period?</p> <p>OBSERVATION: As a 3rd generation Westporter: Ever try having lunch on the River? It's a tidal marsh and smells as such with bugs etc. on this End of the river!</p>
30	8/22/23 9:00 PM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This is not a Charrette - people hanging around for a half hour. 2. The limited seating reflects the the limited vision of this committee. 3. People who are interested in the topic have already studied the plans. 4. Other than very targeted timing - there is no assurance that anyone with limited endurance could find parking to run into Barnes and Noble or Williams Sonoma. 5. This committee has two conflicting goals given the allotted space - it is not possible to cater to commerce and the greenway/waterfront access. 6. This meeting addresses Parker Harding. The plans also call for limited parking next to the library - Jessup Green.
31	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Please include enough benches in green space to sit + enjoy river.
32	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Add more trees & pollinator areas to green spaces.
33	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Hate this plan. Parking spaces take view of the river. Open plan to pedestrian walkways + take the cars away from river.
34	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Main St. should be pedestrian only!

35	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Any plan to deal with issues on the river itself? *Eliminate the invasive phragmites * Respect the water fowl? Other than these - a great plan!
36	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Any thoughts to address speed of cars + pedestrians: 1. Speed humps in parking lots and/or Parker Harding Rd. 2. "True" crosswalks at intersections at Parker Harding + Rt. 1
37	8/22/23 9:00 PM	1. Keep the access road + clean up what is already there. 2. The green spaces that are already in place at PHP and the library area are poorly maintained. I do not want to see a beautiful park and then not be maintained. 3. The garbage in PHP is atrocious. I'm there everyday walking and it is a hot mess. Need more frequent collections.
38	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Cut though way road promotes traffic along waterfront, that is backwards thinking. With cut though road: Park less safe for use by kids. A two way road within parking lot is enough road/driving needed for this area, no need for people to drive though.
39	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Forgive me, but I am too distracted by the monotonous generic portayal of the backs of Main St stores to feel a personal attachment to any of it. How hard would it have been to map that façade with images of the actual stores to make it more relatable, more Westport, more real, more effective, more convincing.
40	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Has anyone considered the impact of the closing of the road? Note: 45 minutes one day from train station to Myrtle and Post.
41	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Charging for electric vehicles?
42	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Please consider removing all parking from the Jesup Green lot. It should be park space, Westport has enough parking.
43	8/22/23 9:00 PM	We need more parking downtown to keep our stores in business. No one want to walk far to run a quick downtown errand.
44	8/22/23 9:00 PM	1. Great job implementing comments from before. 2. Question around the room: can we put walkway over river? 3. Dumpster - should it be more angled for truck access? Hard to tell how it will be screened. 4. Trees along Parker Harding - same flower type? Maybe pull away from street a little.
45	8/22/23 9:00 PM	No taking of the road and 50 spots but e
46	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Keep connector road. Maintain + clean parking lot. And stop!!
47	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Will new design allow enough radii for fire trucks entering from Post Road?
48	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Library paths, green space needs maintaince
49	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Parallel parking along cut though lane
50	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Second dumbster closer to Starbucks would be a good idea
51	8/22/23 9:00 PM	Send landscape plan to tree board for review
52	8/22/23 7:31 PM	Hi - I am home with covid and so not attending tonight's meeting. I had hoped it would be broadcast but am not able to locate it. Are you recording it and will that be available on the town website? (I do have the presentations but am quite interested in the back-and-forth with the stakeholders). Thank you.
53	8/23/23 8:11 AM	Hi - I would like to express my disappointment in the current redesign. One again car advocates won. Do you have data on the current usage of the pass through road? Why keep it? It makes the green area unsafe and adds a barrier between pedestrians and shoops.
54	8/23/23 8:17 AM	Looks much better. Approve!
55	8/23/23 8:24 AM	The cut through road and even the parking lot is a testament to Americans valuing cars and car culture above everything else. Parks, playgrounds and pedestrian plazas foster community. Giving parking lots the most beautiful waterside real estate in town is short sighted and foolish. We love to pay lip service to the environment and green space but clearly when it comes down to it, climate destroying vehicles and capitalism always come before green space. The lot by church Lane could be redesigned, make it two stories and put art on the facade, imperial lot can be made more accessible. The only thing that makes our town better than new canaan or Greenwich is our river, let's spend time by the river. I continue to feel enraged that cars get the best views and walking to town and around town is made unpleasant by the overbearing presence and preference for our beloved gas guzzling planet destroying SUVs. Nothing about this plan encourages any kind of change and I will continue to avoid downtown.
56	8/23/23 10:41 AM	We need to meet all business on main st we need more spots or a park deck or we need to use tow. Hall I requested a meeting with Randy and Jen tooker asap my cell is ###

57	8/23/23 11:20 AM	Hi there, I own Winfield Coffee and we feel that there is a vibrant part of downtown that is completely neglected here on the other side of the bridge. Are there any plans to add additional pedestrian bridges, widen side walks, add parking on our side?
58	8/23/23 4:02 PM	The assumption that the removal of the pass through road will increase traffic is not based on data. Please monitor the traffic on that road first before making a decision. Having a road so close to the already small green space is self defeating and a waste of money. My empirical observation is that road sees very little traffic. It can be removed. Plrase check and make a fata driven decision.
59	8/23/23 5:20 PM	The updated plan looks like a reasonable compromise given some of the issues raised since the last one, however, this does significantly reduce the amount of proposed greenspace - could that be compensated for in some form along the previously proposed bridge? I'm not sure what options there are for widening this or making it more substantial, but I see it as a key piece that could offer additional sitting areas, etc. if not some type of greenery to make up for what's lost in this redesign. I think connecting both sides of the river with a loop that people will actually want to walk around is critical for several of the stated goals for downtown and would draw people toward the area to increase foot traffic for businesses beyond what's achievable with the current configuration.
60	8/23/23 10:08 PM	Thanks for organizing this project on this website an engaging the town community. I am a town resident who submitted feedback to the survey, but was unable to attend last night's charrette. It sounds like the event was held to hear more feedback about restoring the cut-through (used by a max of 100 cars going 28 MPH - too fast for the dense downtown per the traffic study) and parking spaces to enable more convenient shopping (or waiting to pick-up coffee orders from the Starbucks app). However, the survey results show the overwhelming majority of participants want the town to prioritize investment in making riverfront more park-like, and walkable, which in doing so will reduce the amount of inbound vehicle traffic. The survey showed that more people will walk and bike to town vs drive if the vision is realized, yet it seems like this is a missed opportunity because a few people want a short cut to save a few minutes. We would love to see the town continue to optimize its waterfront at parker harding, jesup hall, and extend the riverwalk all the way to Saugatuck by way of integrating a walking and/or biking path with the existing public walking paths near the Saugatuck Rowing Club and boathouse/bridge, the stone path and boardwalk near Rive Bistro, behind the commercial offices, and the beautiful new riverside park. The river is unique to Westport, especially vs other Fairfield metro north towns, should make it more enjoyable and accessible vs worrying about a few more parking spaces and a fast short cut for a few people. It is being dredged next year and we can also see more boat traffic, and with docks we can attract more kayaks, stand-up paddle boarders, and boaters to the town shops and restaurants. Per the survey representing the voice of the majority, more green space and blue space will attract more walkers, bikers, and boaters and reduce congestion and traffic.
61	8/24/23 12:10 PM	Will you be posting online all the raw feedback received via the index cards on August 22nd and via this online form?
62	8/24/23 12:15 PM	I run along the riverfront there. Inwould like to see safer pedestrian crossings and a wider and more pleasent sidewalk along the river
63	8/24/23 12:30 PM	I fully support your redesign of the downtown area! Great work. Keep moving forward.
64	8/24/23 12:42 PM	My concern is for public restrooms to be put in place as the majority of stores do not provide this. As a long time resident of Westport and a worker in the downtown area , parking is a challenge as well as the lack of public restrooms. This would be a very convenient addition to this area. Thank you.
65	8/24/23 1:27 PM	Hi, It's a shame that the cut-through road has been reinstated. I believed the whole aim was to create a safe pedestrian friendly area away from cars. It would also contribute to better air in town and hopefully persuade more people to ditch their wheels and accept that it's better for all to carve out car-free spaces, especially next to places of natural beauty such as riverfronts. I hope that there is support to remove this road again. It's only a question of changing people's perception of ease of access and forcing them to accept that change is good.
66	8/24/23 1:39 PM	Best, I asked my mom to write this for me. I am 7 years old and starting second grade. I love my town and I love the river, especially the swans. I wish there was a place to play in town so I can watch the swans and eat ice cream. Please don't make more parking lots.

67	8/24/23 3:22 PM	My wife and I moved to Westport in 1975, a few months after our wedding. We love and are very proud of the town. We complement your plan. We thank you for your diligent efforts to enhance the quality of life in our town. We have one suggestion. Please put in SPEED BUMPS on the Cut Through Road. Presently, the narrowness of the Cut Through Road in the area with car parking serves as a speed reduction feature. Without something to force drivers to slow down we fear any posted speed limit would often be ignored to the detriment of pedestrians. Thereby reducing the beautiful river access your plan accomplishes.
68	8/24/23 6:36 PM	Hopefully steps will be taken to limit fuel and other contaminants from cars/trucks from reaching the river both by leakage and snow removal.
69	8/24/23 7:30 PM	The August 2023 plan looks very good. It's a good compromise and shows that the town leaders listened to feedback. River access is improved and more visually appealing, cut through road is maintained, parking lot confirmed, and most parking spaces have been retained. I walk through this area multiple times each week and look forward to the plan's implementation. One question - when will the river crossing be completed? Is it also a part of this plan or a later phase?
70	8/24/23 7:42 PM	The lack of available parking, let alone eliminating the small number of spaces there now - will continue to have a negative impact on the businesses downtown. Very few of us in town are able to walk from our homes to downtown and need to drive. The traffic patterns in the center of town are terrible as it is - eliminating streets and parking will only make it worse.
71	8/25/23 5:50 AM	I've been a Westport resident for the past five years. It's a beautiful town to live in! The Riverwalk Parking situation has always been too cramped and difficult to navigate. The proposed changes look beautiful!! It would be a great improvement and make it easier to go there to enjoy downtown Westport (and to park). I think the proposed revision to get the most new parking spots is the best idea. Since parking is the main need downtown. Sincerely,
72	8/25/23 7:34 AM	Repair/redesign is sorely needed. This is a great compromise.
73	8/25/23 8:43 AM	What a waste of money! I don't support.
74	8/25/23 9:54 AM	If you want business to flourish you need to provide more parking. "Pretty green space" is not going to bring in more revenue. The current walkway is more than sufficient and barely used. I have been a resident for more than 35 years and it has become impossible to park in town. And your plan of taking away spaces will make it even harder. I want to spend my money in our local businesses. But if I can't park then I will have to spend my money online. Is that really the solution? And parking on Imperial is a non-starter. Why are we not looking at building a multi-level parking structure behind the Serena and Lily store? Taking away parking spots is not the answer.
75	8/25/23 11:42 AM	I think this new plan addresses the regulation requirements and improves from the chaos this area is currently. Thinking and planning for the future there should be enough EV charging spots and consider building the electrical infrastructure for it.
76	8/25/23 12:03 PM	I appreciate the committee responding to the community's feedback and adjusting the layout. I believe you are at, or close to, end of job on this as this is likely the best alternative.
77	8/25/23 12:08 PM	Please consider a garage in the Baldwin lot - the lot slopes downward anyway and a sea of asphalt and cars is equally unattractive. To this plan, I agree with others who have questioned the wisdom of parking spaces at 90-degree angles to the roadway. Will be lots of multiple attempts to get cars in straight - and Westporters are an impatient group!
78	8/25/23 1:10 PM	Should be angled NOT perpendicular

		<p>I would like to express my concern with the reduced parking plan for the initial Parker Harding Plaza. First I want to state that overall, I believe the plan has some very solid ideas and will be great for downtown! For some background, I have been a resident of this town since I was a child and have enjoyed this town since 2000. I am now raising my 3 children here and I want them to be able to experience what I experienced growing up. I was not able to attend the meeting on the 22nd due to international work commitments. Here are some concerns I have as someone who has been here for years and now raising a family.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parking at Parker-Harding Plaza has always been a challenge, even before COVID. It has only gotten worse with the massive influx of people over the last 3 years. Reducing parking by ~50 spots will cause even more congestion and frustrations when someone wants to run into the cleaners or grab a coffee. There are tons of businesses and all those employees park downtown. 3-hour parking limits (paid or otherwise, marked with chalk or digitally monitored) will not really help. Employees would simply move their cars to another spot. 2. Walking downtown in general. I have 3 children under 6 years old. We come downtown on the weekends to get breakfast/coffee and walk around. If Parker-Harding is full, we park at the library or near the church. Both of these are still pretty convenient. Parking at Imperial is not feasible because there is no access to the library other than a staircase. This means my kids in the wagons or on scooters will need to carry them up the stairs or walk through the dirt all the way around the back of the library. This is not a great start to a morning when I have 3 hungry children. <p>With all that being said, I would like to recommend some changes to the plan.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leave the parking as is, but adjust the spots to be "code compliant". 2. Rework the parking near the Gorham Island side of the parking lot to be more consistent with the rest of the plaza (4 rows of parking where possible) 3. Remove the one-way from Main St to Route 1 that runs along the water, instead have it align with the current 2 one-ways that exist currently. 4. Utilize that removed driving lane (around 15 spots near Starbucks coming from Main St down to Route 1) to create the extended boardwalk and green areas (including the walkway to Bar Taco across the river)
79	8/26/23 6:58 AM	
80	8/27/23 6:30 PM	As a retired downtown area resident, I drive in or thru Parker Harding almost every day. I believe your latest proposed plan is an excellent compromise. The sooner it is implemented the better off and safer we all will be.
81	8/28/23 7:28 AM	The updated plans with preserving the road for traffic look great.

82	8/23/23 10:00 AM	<p>I am a Store Manager on Main Street and was in attendance for your presentation at the Library last night. The “Feedback” basket was getting a lot of action so I decided to go home and think about my response.</p> <p>My overall reaction is that Parker Harding Plaza was built in 1950 when the Westport population was 11,568. The 2022 Census has Westport at 27,427.</p> <p>I think that the Plaza is outdated and you are just moving a band-aid from the left to right.</p> <p>So with my business hat on, and as a 30+ year resident of Westport, here are my suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Re-purpose the Plaza and create the aesthetics you provided on your Riverfront Enhancement Board. 2.Initiate and execute a solution for the ongoing flooding issue. 3.Accommodate business needs i.e. loading and unloading of goods and garbage collection. 4.Create some parking spaces available for visiting Dr’s and Spa goers. 5.Add some Food Trucks that don’t compete with Downtown Restaurants. (The Food Truck business represented a \$1.4B Market in the USA in 2022 and is expected to rise in coming years). 6.Run the Art Show, Octoberfest, etc on the Plaza and eliminate the need to close off Main Street. <p>Then identify an area and build a multi-level parking garage where you can pay by phone or with a credit card and bring Westport into the 21st Century. Surely you have the resources and funding to make this happen.</p> <p>We have turned visions into reality and rebuilt a State Of The Art Library and The Levitt Pavilion for the Performing Arts.</p> <p>We picked up, moved and restored the Kemper-Gunn House and turned a YMCA into a 25,000 Square Foot shopping mecca.</p> <p>David Waldman developed Bedford Square with a great vision for future generations starting with Millennials looking for in-town living.</p>
83	8/28/23 10:26 AM	<p>I fully support the revised August plan. It accommodates requests by the Downtown Association Merchants, meets guidelines and preserves the intent of the project. Thank you to all for the hard work here.</p>
84	8/28/23 5:23 PM	<p>Repave, restripe, keep the parking spaces and current layout. Yes we want more green space, but the Town needs to purchase green space that is already existing and being developed or prevent from being developed.</p> <p>Jesup green, leave as is. It is a waste of money to flip the grass area and beautiful trees for asphalt that’s already there. Such a waste when we have Long Lots, CES, PD & FD buildings to rebuild or renovate.</p> <p>Also these lots are all landfill (solid waste and construction fill) to me we need to think parking.</p> <p>We are not park slope where we need Sidewalks and stop signs and traffic lights and bike lanes all over the friggin place.</p>
85	8/28/23 10:22 PM	<p>Eliminating parking is the worst thing the town can do especially when so many spaces were eliminated to help the Bedford Square development. As a residential tax payer in town i am concern what the lost parking will do to the rental rates on Main St which in turn will lower the value of Main St. Property. I am also very disappointed that no stake holders were on this committee to help give the committee members some Insite into how important convenient parking is (the average person will only walk 7 minutes or less). This plan, as proposed, will further damage the desirability of Main St.</p> <p>In my view the way to mitigate flooding on Main St. Is to install flood gates, similar to those in place in Stamford, at the mouth of the river.</p>

86	8/29/23 8:09 PM	I attended the charette at the Library and was impressed with the level of thoughtfulness that went into this plan. Adding the cut-through lane is a huge improvement, and having wider lanes and parking spots will eliminate a lot of the current frustration for users of the lot. One factor still to be considered in the implementation is how to persuade drivers of large vehicles not to park in the row of smaller spots, which would diminish the benefits of the wider lanes. We all see how often some people parking large SUVs deem them compact and energy-efficient when choosing their parking spots. Thank you to all who clearly worked very diligently on this plan.
87	8/30/23 11:58 AM	<p>I support the Parker Harding proposal based upon the proposal presented in the 2015 Downtown Plan. I have long worked for the enhancement of the riverfront, actively supported the effort in the Downtown Plan and now support the DPIC decision to adhere to the 2015 Plan for Parker Harding. Note, however,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please set forth clearly the additional footage that will be available for the riverfront enhancement, namely, the number of feet the thru road will be moved away from the river. It is crucial all know how much additional "park space" will be provided as compared to the existing tiny amount. 2. Please try to maximize the number of small parking spaces, i.e. by obtaining approval from the P&Z Commission to have far greater than only 20% small parking spaces. 3. Explore with the fire department if additional parking spaces may be generated by reducing somewhat the desires of the fire department.
88	8/30/23 2:31 PM	<p>The cut-through road in Parker Harding needs to stay where it is to alleviate even more traffic on Avery Place, Main Street, and the Post Road, which are already backed up most mornings and other times of heavy traffic. No spaces should be lost except to make the small spaces larger. I have had to shimmy into my car, on the passenger side and climb over the center console (I am in my 70s) since the car parked next to me was only a couple of inches away.</p> <p>As I had recommended on the initial survey, the Baldwin lot on Elm Street should be decked (like the parking facility on Riverside Avenue). It should be as attractive and in the same style as the new development across the street (brick rather than concrete), and if underground parking is possible there, that should be considered as well, and perhaps designated for shopkeepers. That lot should be connected to the lot on Avery Place, with two-story parking in both areas (which would hardly be visible from Main Street).</p> <p>We do not need additional green and riverfront areas in an already congested parking lot, just feet from a busy road. There are plenty of other areas to improve without making parking and traffic worse in the busiest area of town. Improvement to the already present walkway (in the style of the Library Walk), could be made without encroaching on the roadway. Children do not need to play in an area filled with exhaust fumes from cars when there is so much open space elsewhere, for instance, Baron's South. A large park with decent, well-maintained trails, a children's playground, and picnic tables could all be added there, as well as more parking, extending the lower lot at the Senior Center for public use.</p> <p>The end result should be a gain, not a loss, of downtown parking spaces. In a subsequent phase the Imperial Avenue lot, used by the Women's Club, Farmer's Market, Levitt Pavilion, Remarkable Theater, etc. can be reconfigured with more spaces than it currently has, making better use of the entrance/exit lanes.</p>

89	9/2/23 1:51 PM	<p>Thank you for having responded to public input and gone back to the drawing board to produce the revised plan, it is a meaningful improvement over the previous version. The reinstatement of the cut-through road was imperative. The simplified lot design with more space to maneuver seems like it should improve the flow significantly. Love the walkway from the tunnel to the waterfront. I know businesses remain concerned about the loss of parking (though fewer lost spaces in this version), so any discussion with P&Z that might allow for slightly less than standard-size spaces might be worth having - I don't know how many additional spaces it would net, so it may not be worth doing, but it might help address opposition. Glad to see that loading zones have been accounted for, though I would want to hear from businesses about whether the plan addresses their needs on that front.</p> <p>Couple of remaining issues/questions I have: 1) The trash siting still seems sub-optimal, so far from the Starbucks end of the plaza, and also on the river side (environmentally maybe not OK, also blocks river view); 2) can the existing trash cans that are chained to the railing on the river side be moved? Also not the greatest view. 3) Some folks have suggested the idea of a boardwalk that overhangs the river, as there is on the opposite side - was that considered at all? Might make room for the green space that way and result in less parking loss? I'm sure that would be a pricey option, just wondering if it was discussed. 4) I've been hearing a \$6M price tag being bandied about by the public - I haven't seen any official estimates come out, any idea where that # is coming from?</p> <p>Again, many thanks for having heard the public input and acted on it. Until this project gets underway, I'd like to appeal for better maintenance of the Plaza, it really looks terrible. The trash of course is a disgrace - by noon on Sat. before Labor Day is was overflowing into the adjacent parking spaces, presumably not to be picked up till after the holiday. The trees seem to have had no attention for some time and look terrible. The picnic tables are borderline dangerous to sit at these days. Is the boardwalk out into the river open again? I know we might not want to invest a lot in advance of a likely makeover, but we should still be taking care of routine business there.</p>
90	9/2/23 2:37 PM	<p>I am so glad you reconfigured the plans to keep the southbound road, it is critical for navigating to the Library / Jesup Green and heading across the river from points northeast. If this road were eliminated, there would be a significant consequence increasing traffic backed up at Myrtle and Riverside, along with increased congestion in the middle of downtown by people who don't realize Main St has a section that is one-way.</p> <p>I wonder if you can add back a section of parallel parking spaces along the road as well, to mitigate the decrease in parking spaces in the lot itself. I didn't notice, but are there any thoughts about extending the boardwalk to form a walkway from the southern part of Gorham Island's parking lot to a point mid-way along Parker Harding (where there is already a dead-ended boardwalk)?</p>

		<p>Road shift Climate change is pretext to accommodate FS's vision of additional green-space. How would moving the road 5 feet prevent flooding when climate change comes for us?</p> <p>The tide is consistently low at PHP but to be fully respectful of climate, we should engage environmental firms to asses risk and propose strategies. This could lead to better protection and save funds and parking, all while fostering trust that Town Admin is engaged in data-driven decision-making to promote our interests, instead of junk science to prop up its political agenda</p> <p>Fire code Firetrucks have more than enough space to perform service. I question sudden concern about fire hazard after 20 years and request specific fire code statutes</p> <p>Crossing Generally don't see walkways in other parking lots. Opinionated propaganda from plan proponents without single safety incident report. I use the lot nearly every day with my kids and it's as safe as any other</p> <p>Walkways unnecessary but if installed DPIC should illustrate how design minimizes parking displacement</p> <p>2-way corridor Drivers often prefer waiting even on roads where 2 lanes provide opportunity for passing. But it's very rare to wait behind cars in PHP to begin with. And unlike parallel parking, it's easy to quickly move in and out of these spots. So only an occasional and modest inconvenience at issue. This typically happens in parking lots and should not be traded off for more severe problem of diminished parking capacity</p> <p>Parking size Why not re-stripe all parking lots? Every lot in Westport fails the 18x9 standard!</p>
91	9/4/23 9:08 PM	We all appreciate green-space but PHP is already in a picturesque setting and can be modernized and beatified less disruptively. We cannot afford to
92	9/5/23 11:26 AM	To provide better pedestrian access to the river on the eastern side, why not have cantilevered walkways that extend over the river, but not into the river
93	9/5/23 11:40 AM	Have roadway. Redo parking spaces. Cantilever promenade over East side of river

PARKER HARDING PLAZA: CHARRETTE ON 08-22-2023; Web Form Comments

Comment No. 79

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1. Parking at Parker-Harding Plaza has always been a challenge, even before COVID. It has only gotten worse with the massive influx of people over the last 3 years. Reducing parking by ~50 spots will cause even more congestion and frustrations when someone wants to run into the cleaners or grab a coffee. There are tons of businesses and all those employees park downtown. 3-hour parking limits (paid or otherwise, marked with chalk or digitally monitored) will not really help. Employees would simply move their cars to another spot.

2. Walking downtown in general. I have 3 children under 6 years old. We come downtown on the weekends to get breakfast/coffee and walk around. If Parker-Harding is full, we park at the library or near the church. Both of these are still pretty convenient. Parking at Imperial is not feasible because there is no access to the library other than a staircase. This means my kids in the wagons or on scooters will need to carry them up the stairs or walk through the dirt all the way around the back of the library. This is not a great start to a morning when I have 3 hungry children.

With all that being said, I would like to recommend some changes to the plan.

1. Leave the parking as is, but adjust the spots to be "code compliant."
2. Rework the parking near the Gorham Island side of the parking lot to be more consistent with the rest of the plaza (4 rows of parking where possible).
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4. Utilize that removed driving lane (around 15 spots near Starbucks coming from Main St down to Route 1) to create the extended boardwalk and green areas (including the walkway to Bar Taco across the river).

5. Then focus on the rework of the Imperial Ave lot (including a ramp or path directly to the library for wheelchairs/strollers, etc.) to increase the overall parking access to downtown.

6. Lastly focus on the re-work of the front side of the library lot. For this, I would like to see a park with a playground for children to play (swings, slides, play area). Right now, the only place to really go is the beach, which is amazing, but getting all 3 kids covered in sand, just to go on the swings or slide is not really the best experience for a quick playtime. Other options include Earthplace or the schools, but putting this downtown would increase foot traffic downtown, and coupled with the more direct route from the Imperial Ave lot, it could greatly increase overall downtown activity.

I appreciate the plan as a whole and I would love to see it come to fruition, but reducing parking to the most visited lot in the town should not be priority number 1. I am happy to speak more about my recommendations or talk through this with someone. Please contact me via email at #### and we can plan a time to discuss further.

Thank you for taking the time to read through my concerns and recommendations.

PARKER HARDING PLAZA: CHARRETTE ON 08-22-2023; Comments

Comment No. 82

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August 23, 2023

Pete,

I am a Store Manager on Main Street and was in attendance for your presentation at the Library last night. The “Feedback” basket was getting a lot of action so I decided to go home and think about my response.

My overall reaction is that Parker Harding Plaza was built in 1950 when the Westport population was 11,568. The 2022 Census has Westport at 27,427.

I think that the Plaza is outdated and you are just moving a band-aid from the left to right.

So with my business hat on, and as a 30+ year resident of Westport, here are my suggestions:

1. Re-purpose the Plaza and create the aesthetics you provided on your Riverfront Enhancement Board.
2. Initiate and execute a solution for the ongoing flooding issue.
3. Accommodate business needs i.e. loading and unloading of goods and garbage collection.
4. Create some parking spaces available for visiting Dr's and Spa goers.
5. Add some Food Trucks that don't compete with Downtown Restaurants. (The Food Truck business represented a \$1.4B Market in the USA in 2022 and is expected to rise in coming years).
6. Run the Art Show, Octoberfest, etc on the Plaza and eliminate the need to close off Main Street.

Then identify an area and build a multi-level parking garage where you can pay by phone or with a credit card and bring Westport into the 21st Century. Surely you have the resources and funding to make this happen.

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We picked up, moved and restored the Kemper-Gunn House and turned a YMCA into a 25,000 Square Foot shopping mecca.

David Waldman developed Bedford Square with a great vision for future generations starting with Millennials looking for in-town living.

I implore you to set egos aside and relook at what is best for Westport now and for years to come.

Respectfully,

PARKER HARDING PLAZA: CHARRETTE ON 08-22-2023; Web Form Comments

Comment No. 91

KSW NOTE: This comment was too big to display in the Excel cell, so I have included it in full below.

New plan needs to be evaluated independently, section-by-section, despite spin to accept as a package and as compromise

Road shift

Climate change is pretext to accommodate FS's vision of additional green-space. How would moving the road 5 feet prevent flooding when climate change comes for us?

The tide is consistently low at PHP but to be fully respectful of climate, we should engage environmental firms to assess risk and propose strategies. This could lead to better protection and save funds and parking, all while fostering trust that Town Admin is engaged in data-driven decision-making to promote our interests, instead of junk science to prop up its political agenda

Fire code

Firetrucks have more than enough space to perform service. I question sudden concern about fire hazard after 20 years and request specific fire code statutes

Crossing

Generally don't see walkways in other parking lots. Opinionated propaganda from plan proponents without single safety incident report. I use the lot nearly every day with my kids and it's as safe as any other

Walkways unnecessary but if installed DPIC should illustrate how design minimizes parking displacement

2-way corridor

Drivers often prefer waiting even on roads where 2 lanes provide opportunity for passing. But it's very rare to wait behind cars in PHP to begin with. And unlike parallel parking, it's easy to quickly move in and out of these spots. So only an occasional and modest inconvenience at issue. This typically happens in parking lots and should not be traded off for more severe problem of diminished parking capacity

Parking size

Why not re-stripe all parking lots? Every lot in Westport fails the 18x9 standard!

We all appreciate green-space but PHP is already in a picturesque setting and can be modernized and beautified less disruptively. We cannot afford to overindulge in green space at the expense of essential downtown parking. And we don't need to because Westport has incredible greenery nearly everywhere else we turn.

1
have water fountains along
the pathway

2
Removing the entrance to the library,
parking below will create
crowding and back up of
traffic leaving the library and
the Levitt

- Why are we not building the deck @ Baldwin ³
- VPS cannot deliver prior to 10am. I asked so this is a no-go.
- Why is Imperial Lot not being the next priority if you want employee parking there?
- Parking should be at an angle and one way
- There should be an out in the middle as a way to help circulate
- Why not build out over the river for "green space" instead of taking parking.
- I have ~~the~~ seen the lot full of one open space so cars can fit in the curved striping
- I appreciate adding the access here - we need more parking.

I'm not in favor of removing the lower lot Jess up Green spaces and placing them up above by the Police Station. ⁴

You'll remove mature trees.

Replanting new trees does not make up for the removal of mature old trees.

5

The Waterfront is a "gem"

Will there be benches, tables, etc
to encourage people to
sit, relax, read, enjoy lunch, etc —

(didn't see it in the concept drawings
but may be in the plan?)

6

Please make sure trash
compactors are designed to
accommodate full recycling for businesses —
NOT JUST cardboard boxes
Compost/food scrap collection also
an idea

a tiered lot for 7 ↓
Employee and Employees
would be a good idea.
Imperial ave is too far away
and unsafe.

3 hr parking will destroy
businesses. better to have
paid parking w/ app (phone).

Garbage is only on
one side of a very
large parking lot.

This will be very
dysfunctional. The two
way road only works when
no one is parking.

Great presentation.

It would be very helpful to have daily and hourly studies of the number of empty spaces. When there are many empty spaces, by definition, "parking" isn't a problem.

This would allow people to focus on the problematic days and times and get a better sense of the impact and trade-offs.

Thanks,

PLEASE CONSIDER PUTTING A
SPEED BUMP OR HUMP JUST PRIOR
TO TURNING INTO THE PARKING LOT
OFF THE POST ROAD... I WALK
A LOT DOWNTOWN & HAVE ALMOST BEEN
HIT SEVERAL TIMES WALKING FROM STARBUCKS
ACCESS TO RIVERWALK, NOW...

- RIGHT OF WAY MAKING LEFT FROM ONE WAY CUT THROUGH BACK INTO 2-WAY PARKING NEEDS TO BE CLEARLY MARKED

OTHERWISE IN SUPPORT WITH ADDITION OR REINSTATEMENT OF CUT THROUGHED.

I feel

your Aug 22

plan is a good compromise.
 compromise.

Incorporate how to address
traffic and dangerous
crosswalk between Parker Herdley
& library

Thank you for your openness
and thoughtfulness.

Dissease with the cut through
road. How many people use
it, especially if you can expand
the main road without it

It doesn't add parking and
reduces riverfront green space

- MAINTAIN BASIC PARKER MARKINGS CONFIGURATION TO CONSERVE THE CUT-THROUGH ROAD AND, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, THE EXTANT PARKING.
EXTANT
- RESTORE PAVEMENT, REPLACE LANDSCAPING AS NEEDED.
- AND STOP ...

- I appreciate the reconnecting to the river and greenway
however
- The proposal creates issues that do not have adequate solutions -
 - loss of # parking spots in PH, Babler and Jesup. Plus dealing with ? ell and handicap needs.
 - the handling of traffic diversion with the elimination of the pass thru road.

1) 2 way traffic + Parking will
be an accident waiting to
happen. Best to keep 1 way
parking + add 2 way
Exits back

2) Like the Exit Road called
back

Let's do it!

MORE GREEN - MORE SUSTAINABLE!

Could the garden area in the new plan be cantilevered over the river? That way the road leading to the Post Rd could be put back

- 1 - KEEP THE ACCESS ROAD WHERE IT IS.
- 2 - REQUEST THE ~~AREA~~ USPS RESTORE THE MAILBOX TO ITS FORMER ROAD FACING POSITION.

- TIERED PKG. DECK
- NO 2WAY CENTER ROADWAY w/ PKG ON BOTH SIDES
- LONGER DURATION DELIVERY ZONES
- ALTERNATIVE TO PKG. TIME LIMITS
-
- PEOPLE COME TO THE DISTRICT TO SHOP, EAT, RECEIVE MEDICAL, REST MEDICAL LOTHER SUP NOT TO TAKE IN THE RIVER

Services ?

aesthetics

CONNECT THE BOARDWALK ON THE WEST BANK WITH THE EXISTING BRIDGE BY GORHAM ISLAND - ALLOWS WALKING AROUND THE RIVER VS CURRENT "DEAD ENDS". THIS WAS ARTHUR TAUCK'S VISION WHEN HE RENOVATED WEST SIDE OF RIVER IN THE 90'S AND PUT IN WIDE BOARDWALK ON THAT SIDE,

- ALSO NICE FOR ACCESS FOR RESIDENTS IN NEW APARTMENTS GOING IN ON WEST SIDE.

This is a solution looking for a problem.

The two biggest problems in downtown are:

- Traffic
- Lack of Parking

This doesn't address one or the other
The other:

all of this expense & effort to expand ^{width of} feet
the sidewalk and add a stripe + glass
that has no practical use?! ↓

We need ~~bike paths~~ and

We need ^{be} feasible to walk safely and/or
ride our bikes, especially in Coley town.

We need a solution for that.

What's the plan for the existing ²³↓
trees?

Are you cutting them down? ~~and~~

If you plan to plant new ones, you
have to include \$1 in the budget for
feeding & watering or they will
die under our current drought conditions.
Many of the new plantings around town ↓

haven't made it through the
year because there's no money
in the budget for feeding &
watering.

Town already doesn't have
enough parking.

The continued building of
more apts along the Post
road in Westport, and in
Norwalk makes it even
harder to find a parking place.

Maybe somewhere a 2-level
parking garage shld be created
in a "SAFE" place.

1. line that cut through road
is on the plan

2. maximize parking by
removing the green space

Two thoughts:

1) Is the roadway necessary?
Could we get more parking or
riverfront access if cars just
drove through the lot?

2) Will the roadway be designed
for bikes to share the road?
Or will bikes be in the same
flow as cars?

Is the strip-Prison-Building
being funded by CT state?

It's not planned is it?

- ① Get rid of green space
- ② add more parking
- ③ Done!

If we were losing 10 spots this
wouldn't be an issue!

PLEASE INCLUDE ENOUGH
BENCHES IN GREEN SPACE
TO SIT + ENJOY RIVER

CONCERN:

No Loading Zone
 Removal of the ONLY cut thru road to Rt 1 for trucks will cause major ^g congestion.

IDEA: why ^{can't} the town and police implement an "experimental" enforcement of this first using cones and road blocks to really see → ↓

in real time what will happen over a month long period?

OBSERVATION AS A 3rd generation Westporter:

Ever try having lunch on the RIVER? It's a tidal marsh and smells as such w/ bugs etc on this end of the RIVER!

- 1. This is not a Charette - people standing around for a half hour.
- 2. The limited seating reflects the limited vision of this committee.
- 3. People who are interested in the topic have already studied the plans.
- 4. Other than very targeted timing - there is no assurance that anyone with limited endurance could find parking to run into Barnes and Noble or Wilbur Scammon ↓

- 5. This committee has two conflicting goals in this given the allotted space - it is not possible to cater to commerce and the greening/waterfront access.
- 6. This meeting address Park at Harbor. The plans also call for limited parking next to the library. Joseph Green.

32

add more trees &
pollinator areas to
green spaces

33

Hate this Plan. Parking spaces take view
of the river
Open plan to pedestrian walkways
& take the cars away from river

Main St should be
pedestrian only!

~~§~~

Any plan to deal with
issues on the river itself?

* Eliminate the invasive
Phragmites

* Respect the water fowl?

Other than these - a
great plan!

Any thoughts to address
Speed of cars +
pedestrians

- ① Speed humps in parking lots
and/or Parker Harding Rd
- ② "True" Crosswalks at intersections
~~with~~ at Parker Harding +
Rte 1

CUTTHROUGH WAY RD PROMOTES TRAFFIC ALONG
WATER FRONT, THAT IS BACKWARDS THINKING

- WITH CUT THROUGH ROAD: PARK LED SAFE
FOR USE BY KIDS

- ~~REMOVE PARKING~~

- A TWO WAY ROAD WITHIN PARKING LOT
IF ENOUGH ROAD/DRIVING NEEDED FOR THIS
AREA, NO NEED FOR PEOPLE TO DRIVE
THROUGH

37 ↓

Keep the access road &
clean up what is already
there. The green spaces that
are already in place at PHP
and the library area are poorly
maintained. I don't want to
see a beautiful park and ↓

Then not be maintained.
The garbage in PHP is atrocious.
I'm there everyday walking
and it is a hot mess. Need
more frequent collections.

FORGIVE ME, BUT I AM TOO
 DISTRACTED BY THE MONOTONOUS
 GENERIC PORTRAYAL OF THE
 BACKS OF MAIN ST STORES
 TO FEEL A PERSONAL ATTACHMENT
 TO ANY OF IT. HOW HARD
 WOULD IT HAVE BEEN TO MAP
 THAT FACADE WITH IMAGES OF
 THE ACTUAL STORES, TO MAKE
 IT MORE RELATABLE. MORE
 WESTPORT, MORE REAL,
 MORE EFFECTIVE, MORE CONVINCING.

Traffic

Has anyone considered
 the impact of the closing
 of the Road?

Note

45 minutes one way from Train Station
 to Myrtle and Post.

Charging for Electric Vehicles?

Please Consider
Removing all parking
from The Jesup Green Lot.
It should be park space
Westport has enough Parking.

We need more parking
downtown to keep our
stores in business.

No one wants to walk
far to run a quick
downtown errand.

- Great Job implementing comments from before. } - Can we put walkway
- Question around the room: over river?
- Dumpster - should it be more angled for truck access? Hard to tell how it will be screened
- Trees Along parker harding
Same Flower type? Maybe pull ~~away~~
from street a little

No Action

Talking of the Road

and

spots

but

e

Keep Connector Road

Maintain & Clean

Parking lot

And stop !!

PARKER HARDING PLAZA: CHARRETTE ON 08-22-2023; Web Form Comments

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August 23, 2023

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(Original Letter)

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Pete,

I am a Store Manager on Main Street and was in attendance for your presentation at the Library last night. The “Feedback” basket was getting a lot of action so I decided to go home and think about my response.

My overall reaction is that Parker Harding Plaza was built in 1950 when the Westport population was 11,568. The 2022 Census has Westport at 27,427.

I think that the Plaza is outdated and you are just moving a band-aid from the left to right.

So with my business hat on, and as a 30+ year resident of Westport, here are my suggestions:

1. Re-purpose the Plaza and create the aesthetics you provided on your Riverfront Enhancement Board.
2. Initiate and execute a solution for the ongoing flooding issue.
3. Accommodate business needs i.e. loading and unloading of goods and garbage collection.
4. Create some parking spaces available for visiting Dr's and Spa goers.
5. Add some Food Trucks that don't compete with Downtown Restaurants. (The Food Truck business represented a \$1.4B Market in the USA in 2022 and is expected to rise in coming years).
6. Run the Art Show, Octoberfest, etc on the Plaza and eliminate the need to close off Main Street.

Then identify an area and build a multi-level parking garage where you can pay by phone or with a credit card and bring Westport into the 21st Century. Surely you have the resources and funding to make this happen.

We have turned visions into reality and rebuilt a State Of The Art Library and The Levitt Pavilion for the Performing Arts.

We picked up, moved and restored the Kemper-Gunn House and turned a YMCA into a 25,000 Square Foot shopping mecca.

David Waldman developed Bedford Square with a great vision for future generations starting with Millennials looking for in-town living.

I implore you to set egos aside and relook at what is best for Westport now and for years to come.

Respectfully,

PARKER HARDING PLAZA: CHARRETTE ON 08-22-2023; Web Form Comments

Comment No. 91

KSW NOTE: This comment was too big to display in the Excel cell, so I have included it in full below.

New plan needs to be evaluated independently, section-by-section, despite spin to accept as a package and as compromise

Road shift

Climate change is pretext to accommodate FS's vision of additional green-space. How would moving the road 5 feet prevent flooding when climate change comes for us?

The tide is consistently low at PHP but to be fully respectful of climate, we should engage environmental firms to assess risk and propose strategies. This could lead to better protection and save funds and parking, all while fostering trust that Town Admin is engaged in data-driven decision-making to promote our interests, instead of junk science to prop up its political agenda

Fire code

Firetrucks have more than enough space to perform service. I question sudden concern about fire hazard after 20 years and request specific fire code statutes

Crossing

Generally don't see walkways in other parking lots. Opinionated propaganda from plan proponents without single safety incident report. I use the lot nearly every day with my kids and it's as safe as any other

Walkways unnecessary but if installed DPIC should illustrate how design minimizes parking displacement

2-way corridor

Drivers often prefer waiting even on roads where 2 lanes provide opportunity for passing. But it's very rare to wait behind cars in PHP to begin with. And unlike parallel parking, it's easy to quickly move in and out of these spots. So only an occasional and modest inconvenience at issue. This typically happens in parking lots and should not be traded off for more severe problem of diminished parking capacity

Parking size

Why not re-stripe all parking lots? Every lot in Westport fails the 18x9 standard!

We all appreciate green-space but PHP is already in a picturesque setting and can be modernized and beautified less disruptively. We cannot afford to overindulge in green space at the expense of essential downtown parking. And we don't need to because Westport has incredible greenery nearly everywhere else we turn.