

Great Streets Initiative- Public Presentation of Concept Plans
Summary of Main Street Comments
Received November to December 2016

This document summarizes over 400 comments received following the Great Streets presentation in November 2016, and focuses on the Main Street Concept Plan. Many of these 400 comments were questions about the plans. To see a summary of the City Hall Park concept plan input, responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), or a spreadsheet of all comments received to-date, please visit www.greatstreetsbtv.com

Overall: Wide range of comments from people fully supportive, some that love the design but are cautious about potential impacts on traffic delay, to those that do not support the change on the principle of lost parking. As far as the level of design is concerned, again, some love it and are fully supportive, while others generally agree with the inclusion of all modes, but worry about “too many ornaments” in the corner placemaking, materials, etc.

Balancing the Range of Users of our Streets

1. Wider Sidewalks & Pedestrian Ways

- a. Many have expressed supportive comments about expanding width of sidewalks to support pedestrian activity in the core of downtown, and to make pedestrian safety a priority in the design. Many expressed that pedestrian safety/accessibility concerns should least keep pace with commercial interests
- b. Some shared comments about expanding the pedestrian-only grid (like Church Street) to the streets around the park, while others support the idea of “shared space” around the edges of the park. Still others don't feel that pedestrian-only streets should be extended outside of Church Street.
- c. There was general support for a mid-block on Main Street between the Flynn and City Hall Park; however, the Flynn Theater has expressed concerns about this concept.
- d. Several suggestions were shared about improving pedestrian safety, including: automating walk signals at Main Street intersections with Winooski & Church, incorporating flat, non-skid surfaces, appropriate benches/fixtures, handicap parking spaces and compliant entrances to buildings to improve ADA accessibility throughout the plan.
- e. Some question whether bumpouts and wider sidewalks are needed, or if issues of pedestrian safety at intersections could simply be addressed by creating longer pedestrian signals OR using round about at all intersections possible.

2. Bike Facilities

- a. In general, there were many supportive comments shared about the addition of the bike facility on Main Street, and applaud the design as a progressive, forward thinking change for Burlington.
- b. There were some concerns expressed about the introduction of the bike lane, particularly by those who cite it as a “tradeoff” for public parking.
- c. There are some questions about how the lane will work, including how to address safety at intersections, and how to ensure users will “stay in their lane” throughout the corridor.

3. Vehicles

- a. Some questioned whether the plan “shrinks” vehicular lanes too much in order to accommodate wider sidewalks and tree belts, and to add a bike facility.
- b. Others support the concept as a good balance between maintaining driving and parking, while also allowing for other modes of transportation to be safely accommodated.
- c. Many commented that they like the design, but that care must be taken to ensure that it does not create unacceptable levels of travel delay. Additionally, many expressed concern about the long-term collective impacts of increased traffic downtown as a result of several new developments.

4. Stormwater & Trees

- a. Overall, many supportive comments about improving the health of street trees and the lake (via stormwater runoff) by incorporating a wider tree belt to support these functions. There was also general support for eliminating grass-planted tree belts as they are prone to erosion and compaction and are not attractive or functional in a dense downtown setting.
- b. Comments from some business owners on Main Street question whether trees are necessary due to the fact that they can block signs on buildings.
- c. Others asked if it is possible to put fruit trees on Main Street to be a “productive urban food source”

5. Retail Frontage

- a. Only a few comments on this element. Some think it is not necessary in all areas of the Main Street corridor because there are not necessarily businesses along the street that will use it, or because it is “privatization” of public space.

Corner Placemaking (Deck, Terrace, Garden)

- a. Support for stormwater gardens generally; some asked whether the size of the gardens could be reduced to allow for more parking spaces on each block.
- b. Several people had questions and encouraged more study about the interaction of the bike lane and the deck, to ensure safety and efficiency at the intersection.
- c. Many people love the corner seating options and the flexibility afforded by the terraces, while others, including some business owners, express concern about these becoming areas for loitering and undesirable behavior.

Parking (Conversion from diagonal to parallel)

- a. Many feel that the streetscape improvements are nice and inviting, but several businesses have expressed that loss of any number of parking spaces will have a negative impact on businesses, when customers already complain about the lack and expense of parking.
- b. Others feel that the concept is inspirational, allowing Main Street to become more of a destination rather than just a place to park cars, and that the parking loss is minimal in context of all of the downtown parking resources and the opportunity cost is low for the high benefit of incorporating more modes of transportation into the street.
- c. Some believe that more people will frequent downtown businesses if there are better opportunities to walk and bike to destinations along Main, and point to Church Street as an example of how well a street has done with no parking.
- d. Several residents have questioned whether parallel parking is too difficult and will block traffic more frequently, and if it is safe in a downtown.
- e. The Burlington Business Association asked for a study on whether it is feasible to retain diagonal parking on one side of the street, if a bi-directional bike facility was located on the other.

Other Concerns/Comments

1. Phasing of Implementation

- a. There were many questions about how to phase the project, if the middle two blocks are the only ones that will be constructed in 2018. Some have asked if the whole project can wait until there is funding for all 6 blocks to be constructed at once, while others have asked if we could just implement basic changes to the dimensions of the road before implementing all of the other details (trees, furnishings, etc).
- b. Many are worried that there won't be funding for the rest of the street, and that the transition will cause issues with flow and cohesion of Main Street.

2. Long-Term/District-wide Parking Management

- a. Many business owners have questions about overall parking management throughout downtown that need to be addressed.

- b. Some businesses have expressed an openness to changing parking on Main Street, as it is not a total loss, as long as there is a strategy for balancing resources, and that they feel that employee's safety and customer's convenience can be managed.
- c. There were many questions about what is being done, or can be done, to help balance public and private off-street resources, including signage directing parking vehicles to those spaces and whether or not the pricing can be capped

3. Construction Timing/Management

- a. Many businesses expressed concerns about the real and perceived impacts that construction projects can have on businesses economically.
- b. Several acknowledge that construction will always have an impact, but that it needs to be well-managed and phased to avoid impacting the most critical/most visited/etc times of year
- c. A key element that businesses have expressed concern about is having information, having regular communication, and knowing what is going on and who to reach about questions about construction projects. For business owners, communication is considered to be one of the most critical issues.

4. Flynn Theater

- a. Has expressed concern about the mid-block crossing, bump-outs that would reduce the street's ability to be used as 4 lanes on major event weekends, and impact on Main Street traffic congestion as a result of the loss of left turn lane at St. Paul Street. Also concerned about the availability of space for bus loading/unloading during student matinees. Other concerns about timing of construction relative to annual events.

5. Burlington Business Association

- a. Requested that the City consider modifying the concept plan to include a bi-directional bike facility on one side of the street, with diagonal parking maintained on the other side of the street in order to reduce the impact overall on parking in the Main Street corridor.