

Oak Bluffs Public Meeting

October 26, 2016

Meeting Notes

Compiled by Tim Wong, Waterfield Design Group

General Issues

- Hard copies of the plans will be made available for public viewing.
- Town will take feedback via email, and will then have a 2nd public forum with refined plans.
- The purpose of the meeting is to reach a general public consensus, and then to apply for grants.
- Discussed timing of the project, grant funding, and concern about making the plan more attractive for state and federal funding.

Streetscape Walkthrough

- Loading area on Circuit Ave outside Healey Square is inadequate. Want more loading space to alleviate need to use Campground streets for loading access
- Discussed undergrounding utility lines. Will be considered along with cost.
- Request that trees be spaced away from the buildings so that you can see the signage.

North Bluff Park

- Besides improving the area for the busy season, the Streetscape Committee is also thinking year-round use. We want a design that is not oriented solely for the 2 busy months, which leads toward more beautification of the area.
- Comment that the area should signal that Oak Bluffs is a nice place to stay, rather than an easy place to leave. Want to make the area more representative of the town.
- Most everyone thought that the area was broken and needed revision.
- Question on whether the roundabout option will provide better traffic flow. Most likely yes, because it will provide more structure and order to the area.
- What would a patrolman tell someone about the rules now? Need rules and structure first.
- Concept 3 was the consensus best plan shown.
- Attendee liked Concept 3 in that cars can loop around again for active pickup if you miss your first pass. Similar to Logan airport terminals.
- Comment that design would ideally corral people to the Harborside walk.
- Concern for traffic flow on Fridays when the boats arrive.
- Discussion of exactly how many parking spots are lost in each plan.
- Want to preserve parking for Harbormaster people.
- Need for balance in the amount of taxi parking. There can be a mad rush, but only when boat is there.

- Comment that we are never going to have enough parking in the area. We could never accommodate all demand when the boat comes in during the summer. So why bother adding more? Goal is to make the area more attractive year-round, convenient to use during the non-crazy times, and manageable when the big boats come in.
- There is more temporary parking on the plans than at Vineyard Haven, where there are 1500 people coming off the boats.
- Attendee encouraged having a large active dropoff lane. Maybe active dropoff could also be done in the 'Pass Through Lane' east of the bus stop.
- Discussion that Island Queen representatives liked Concept 3 best. They wanted to add 4 more benches, and reminded that there are 600+ passengers in July/August.
- Possible to put tour buses closer to Circuit Ave?
 - Brian to talk to Scott Dario, who pays to use the bus spots.
- Concern about pedestrian safety when big trucks backing in to the Patriot cargo boats. However, it's mostly vans and small trucks that go meet the Patriot.
- Larger deliveries, such as the 4am newspaper cargo, come in during less busy hours.
- Area must feel safe to cross the street at boat time. Many people wanted the crosswalk across the 15 minute parking area to the boardwalk.
- Suggestion to make a crosswalk to the taxi stand/bus stop area, at the sidewalk peninsula.
- Is there the possibility of making Circuit Ave 2-way traffic down to Saco Ave? Then the roundabout would be less crowded.
 - Traffic pattern was looked at extensively in Streetscape Phase 1. But we can revisit it.
 - Attendee mentioned that there are plans from 15 years ago with different car circulation patterns
- Discussion on viability of trees at North Bluff. Some don't think trees can live there, others don't want to give up on plants and landscaping. This area would have ConCom guidance for choosing plant material.
- Consideration for restrooms and covering for rainy days? Seniors can't walk all the way to Steamship Authority bathrooms.
- Idea proposed for temporary shade structures for people waiting for boats.

Circuit Ave / Lake Ave Parking Reconfiguration

- A majority of attendees liked the idea of having at least part of Circuit Ave changed to the wider sidewalks/parallel parking. Important to make Oak Bluffs a more pedestrian friendly town. Narrow width of sidewalks is a safety concern.
- Discussion about how much of Circuit Ave to change
 - The compromise plan would be to do just from Healey Square to Lake Ave.
 - Could do Healey Square to Lake Ave as a test area. Can extend to Kennebec Ave later.
 - Budgetary reason to do entire street at once
 - Contested whether pedestrian congestion is worse on Circuit Ave north of Healey Square, or if it's equally congested throughout.
 - Need to try to make sure the streetscape elements fit together even if only part of Circuit Ave is renovated in this way.

- However, if we keep part of Circuit Ave diagonal parking with the existing sidewalk width, it would be a visual barrier. Pedestrians could be wary of the narrower sidewalk if it's crowded.
 - Just having new pavement would make a big difference to pedestrian safety, even at their current width.
- Oak Bluffs is moving towards a park and ride system anyways. Longer-term solution is a public parking garage. There will never be enough parking in downtown to meet demand.
- Fire trucks park on the north end of Circuit Ave in the summer anyways, and reduce the number of spaces.
- Attendee proposed having more parking at Ocean Park to compensate.
 - However, we don't want to get into the position where we wrap our parks in cars.
- Attendee brought up downtown Edgartown, which has parallel parking downtown and a beautiful streetscape. They have a park and ride system. We have diagonal parking around Ocean Park. We might as well go all the way down Circuit Ave with the parallel parking.
- Who are the people who park on Circuit in summer? Mostly store owners and employees. They move their cars around, and the cops don't ticket them.
- Could we make some of the new parking on Lake Ave designated as employee parking? We need to incentivize employers to guide their employees to park on Lake Ave.
- It is easier for seniors to do diagonal parking instead of parallel. However, diagonal parking also has backing up/blind spot issues.
- Circuit Ave used to be parallel, but cars have gotten bigger since then.
- Attendee said to think about people buying goods at the Circuit Ave stores. They're not going to want to lug their goods to Lake Ave.
 - However, visitors lug them to the boats all the time.
- We would want to provide more than the usual amount of ADA parking spots in this area, because less able-bodied people would have difficulty walking up the hill.
- Need to consult with fire chief on the raised table and reduced width there.
- For Lake Ave, is it possible to have parallel on the harbor side and diagonal inland? Then it's easier for people coming into town to access the diagonal parking.
 - This was a popular idea. Previous plans studied that kind of layout.
 - Would want to make a new sidewalk on the inland side to convert it to diagonal parking.
- The existing loading zone seems insufficient for more than 1 vehicle. Attendees liked having the additional loading area. Parallel parking is more conducive to loading areas.
 - Businesses on the west side of street use the Campground street for loading. Campground has objected to this.
- Parallel parking space size can vary in order to fit more spaces. Can have some be compact spaces. Compact spaces (new and existing) would be marked accordingly.
- Mopeds are not allowed to go up Circuit Ave, so no special parking for them.
- Importance of signage and wayfinding. Need to inform visitors where they can get to in 5, 10, 15 minutes.
- Reminder that sidewalks must be quite a bit wider in the new design. With parallel parking, car doors open out into the sidewalk and street.
- Currently there's a problem with bumpers overhanging the curb, mostly because diagonal spaces are too short.