

To: Mayor Casale and the Beacon City Council
From: John Clarke, City Planner
Date: August 23, 2019
Re: Main Street Width and Parking

The width of Main Street has been a subject of discussion lately, along with potential changes to the parking configuration. To help in the upcoming workshop discussion I have attached the measurements for certain sections on Main Street. The curb-to-curb widths vary with the two narrowest sections near Bank Square and east of Chestnut Street, where the travel lanes are less than 10 feet wide.

The best source of guidance that I have found on these issues is *Walkable City Rules, 101 Steps to Making Better Places* by Jeff Speck, who has led urban design and pedestrian-oriented planning projects all over the country. The book has chapters with specific standards for right-sizing the lanes, getting the parking right, parking on street, building bike networks, and other relevant topics. Particularly for Beacon's Main Street problem, the book has two sections that promote adopting a 10-foot standard for travel lanes and encouraging curb-side parking almost everywhere.

The contention, backed up by research, is that city lanes more than 10 feet wide result in higher vehicle speeds that increase the risk of crashes and the severity of injuries to walkers. A 10-foot lane provides enough sense of side friction that drivers subconsciously slow down to safer speeds for a pedestrian environment, while still allowing for enough room for 6-foot-wide cars and larger 8.5-foot-wide buses to pass comfortably. His advice is to stripe the parking lanes for the appropriate width between 7 – 9 feet wide to provide the proper travel lane width. I have also attached examples from Wappingers Falls and Jim Thorpe, PA, where the parking lanes are striped to 7 feet and even 6 feet wide and drivers complied by just parking closer to the curb.

My recommendation is to decide on the ideal lane width for Main Street, at 10 feet or no more than 10.5 feet, and to restripe the parking lanes to provide a consistent travel lane width along the entire street.

As for on-street parking, Speck's book encourages it wherever possible. Curb-side parking provides the best sense of protection from moving traffic for walkers and sidewalk diners, it is essential as the most convenient access to Main Street businesses, it is the most space-efficient type of parking because there is no separate access aisle required, and it helps reduce the street-deadening effects of large parking lots. The 2014 Parking Analysis counted 326 on-street parking spaces along Main Street. These spaces are critical for a successful business district and active sidewalks.

I look forward to a lively discussion on August 26.