

**Derry Downtown Committee Site Walk Minutes**  
**Wednesday, September 29, 2010**

Present: Gordon Graham, Tom Hankin, Mike Gendron, David Granese, Chief Edward Garone, Mike Fowler, John O'Connor, George Sioras, Diane Gavrish, Judy Strakalaitis, Kaitlyn Wood, Elizabeth Robidoux

The walk began shortly after 7:30 a.m., in the parking lot of the Derry Municipal Center. Gordon Graham noted the focus of the walk is to look at parking and to see if the group can determine ways to enhance the feeling of pedestrian safety. It is not that pedestrians are unsafe, but that is the perception. He commented positively on the new intersection at Birch and Crystal, as well as the repainting of the stamped sidewalks. The intent today is to identify parking locations, signs, and see if there is a way to heighten awareness of the public parking lots. They are marked as municipal lots, but is it clear they are municipal lots?

The group progressed to Wall Street. It was noted parking at the Derry Municipal Center is open between the hours of 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. for customers at the DMC only. After hours, the lot is available for public parking. There are also 17-18 spaces available along McAllister Court that are available at all times with no restriction.

Chief Garone felt it was important to have standardized signs so that there is continuity. Mike Gendron felt that the blue "P" signs, such as are located in Boston, stand out more. Chief Garone noted that signage becomes part of the landscape. Gordon asked if placing the signs higher would help?

John O'Connor stated Wall Street has no sign directing people to the lot. Mike Fowler pointed out the sign on Railroad Ave that is the preferred way to access the lot. It was suggested that double facing the sign at the top of Railroad Ave would assist with directing traffic into the lot. Comment was made that there is no sidewalk on Wall Street, which makes it dangerous to walk during the winter months.

Gordon Graham noted the improvements Public Works has made to the Wall Street lot. A retaining wall was constructed, the lot graded, paved and striped. It is a great lot, but underutilized. People just don't use it. There is a great sign on Railroad Ave., perhaps an additional sign here, noting public parking, would be beneficial. Chief Garone suggested striping the public parking lots in a different color so that it would be immediately apparent it was a public parking area. Mike Fowler added that placing a large, Welcome to the Wall Street Parking Lot, with a list of rules/regulations in a very visible location in the lot would also help. It was noted this lot is well lit. The downside of the lot is that one of the businesses adjacent to it, stores old parts vehicles along the entrance, which creates a negative image. It was suggested a fence be placed along the property line; Chief Garone indicated the town could put one on its property, but we can't make the property owner do it. Another suggestion was to add an additional sign on Wall Street, near the public entrance to the lot (adjacent to the Auto Service business) to direct public traffic into the lot.

Mike Fowler offered to look at other communities to see what they do as there should be a standard that is used throughout the town. He can come up with some templates that can be distributed to the group members for their comment back to him. Diane Gavrish asked who would park in the Wall Street

lot? This parking is used for overflow parking. Gordon Graham stated if the Pet Store building is ever revamped, this would be the parking area for that block of business.

The new Birch Street lot will be added to the downtown parking map – the request has already been made to the IT Director.

The group viewed the old Shamrock Cleaner site which is privately owned (Parcel 30018/30017). Mike Fowler advised there is an EPA lien on the property and the town would have to purchase it. The site does not qualify as a Brownfields site as the soil has been cleaned.

The group viewed the Merchant Street parking lot, which is public. DPW keeps it clear. Mike Fowler noted the public is not generally aware of the effort DPW expends on this area. The stairway leading down to Abbott Court is consistently the subject of vandalism in the form of graffiti, which takes time to clean. The stairway is adjacent to the bike path, which also suffers from vandalism. A suggestion was to add a sign for the Merchant's Row parking lot. Chief Garone advised that since Public Works added the yellow stripe with "No Parking", people have stopped parking along the right hand side of the lot, which used to block in vehicles that had parked head in.

The group viewed the Abbott Court lot. It was noted people can't see the businesses from the lot, which is a detriment to parking there. In this lot, there is a section of private parking that is used by the residents at the Abbott House. There are also 14 spaces that are designated winter permit parking. These spaces are available by ordinance, to tenants in the downtown. The residents pay for the ability to park in those spaces during the winter months. The issue is when the town needs to plow the lot, the people who have obtained permits tend to complain that they have been plowed in. Gordon suggested having the residents sign a form when they obtain their permit that acknowledges they are not to expect to be plowed or shoveled out during a winter storm. George Sioras advised the lot to the rear of Abbott Court is town owned (DiFeo Lot, Parcel 30037). John O'Connor suggested adding a spot light that lights up the DiFeo lot to help prohibit people hanging out there. It was noted the sidewalk along Abbott Court is very dim at night; this is the most direct access to Broadway. Tom Hankin suggested adding an exit sign leading to Central Court. Dave Granese suggested adding some type of painting on the ground, similar to the Freedom Trail, to help direct pedestrian traffic up Abbott Court. Another suggestion was to paint footprints. Tom commented a sign is needed that identifies this lot as a municipal lot. The signs should be kept simple. It was felt if Abbott Court was more pedestrian friendly, the sidewalk and the parking lot might be better utilized. Judy noted the "Do Not Enter" sign to the left blocks the sidewalk, which makes it hard to push a stroller up to Broadway. It was noted the signage in this lot is confusing. It is a municipal lot, but some of the parking is private. Chief Garone thought this was a good example of how a specific color striping for public parking could be a benefit. The group walked across the lot to the corner near Sawyer Court. They looked at the fence that had been recently erected that now prohibited pedestrians from climbing up the hill from the parking lot to gain access to Broadway. Mike Gendron felt if the vegetation was cleared, a pedestrian path could be installed that led to Broadway. It was not clear as to ownership of the right of way in that location and that would be further investigated.

Chief Garone discussed officers assigned to this area. The officers on duty go from call to call. It enhances public safety when there are preventative patrols and a police presence. The issue with using 'beat cops' is that troublemakers get to know the 'beat' and can determine just how long it will take the officer to get from one point to another and they plan accordingly. Motorized travel takes away that

*Downtown Committee, site walk  
September 29, 2010, page 2*

predictability. The Derry Police Department had to cut out the bike patrols because of funding issues; the officers worked the bike detail as overtime.

Mike Fowler thought a sign could be added to one of the islands in the Abbott Court lot, and it was mentioned that someone may need to speak with the DEDC about their signs that identify the private parking area. Lighting up Abbott Court needs to be addressed.

Sawyer Court – the entry is narrow (about 22 feet wide). There is an issue with the private property line. Mike Fowler noted the town does not have a lot of right of way on Sawyer. There is a Central Street Extension that leads to the DiFeo lot. The goal is to direct people up Abbott Court because of the stamped sidewalk. There is nothing of that nature on Central Street.

Diane asked if the stamped sidewalk would be continued up to the Library? Mike Fowler said what can be seen at Birch Street is what we can do at this point. The bigger plan is to continue the sidewalk to McGregor Park, but that requires funding that they just don't have. He is aware of the issues in front of the Masonic Temple. Diane reported Brad had said the town would work on the parking lot at the Library.

The group proceeded to walk up Sawyer to Central. Mike Fowler said he did not believe that a sidewalk could be added to Sawyer as the town does not own it. The new fence is located behind the Pillsbury House. The group noted the sign at the intersection of Sawyer and Central indicates parking and also has a directional sign for Broadway. It was noted the sidewalk on Central Court is not in good shape, nor is it really adequate for a wheelchair.

The group discussed how best to direct Opera House traffic, and other visitors to the downtown to the Abbott Lot. Chief Garone suggested painting a blue square in the road with a "P" to direct people to the parking lot. The road markings should be the same color as stripes in the public parking lots. It was noted that there is an ongoing issue with signs in the downtown; the intent is to not clutter up the downtown with signs.

Mike Gendron said the people who come to the Opera House tend to drive past it, then turn around and go park in the rear of the building, or they park at Vet's Hall. The Recreation Department will come over and ask that the Opera House patrons move their vehicles when there are basketball games in session. This creates a disruption in the show at the Opera House as announcements have to be made in the middle of the show. They do have a statement on the doors regarding the availability of parking as well as on line. Gordon suggested handing out something to the patrons as they come in to reinforce that. It was suggested that the parking sign located in front of the vacant lot (Parcel 30043) adjacent to the Opera House be double sided to assist with direction to the parking lot. Chief Garone suggested moving the Parking sign located on Central Street to the right side of the street. Mike Fowler noted there is a parking space to the east of Halligan's that interferes with sight distance.

Gordon Graham suggested some form of traffic calming be implemented so that people know they are entering the downtown which is a high traffic area. In Europe, there are large signs at the entrance to each town/city that indicates you are entering the town, to slow down, and to be aware of pedestrians. It seems to work. Dave Granese suggested re-instituting the banners that used to be along Broadway, or American flags to identify the downtown area.

The walk continued down West Broadway toward the Municipal Center. At Abbott Court, there is a sign that indicates parking, but when you turn down the road, there are two “No Parking” signs facing you. Chief Garone suggested signage that states “no parking from here to the corner”. It was noted the Granary parking is public, and is posted for 2 hour parking.

Regarding the Library lot, Diane asked if it would be spruced up and winterized? Mike Fowler said the current lighting there is a pole with two “cobra head” style lights. There is no decorative lighting at this location. It would be expensive to install as it requires underground conduit. The Recreation Department can clean up the lot, but there are no funds dedicated to that parking lot at this time. Diane noted the sidewalk in front of the Masonic Temple is the largest issue. John O’Connor said that in the winter, the grade of the sidewalk causes ice and slush to accumulate, making it difficult for pedestrians. Diane also commented there is now signage in front of the Temple that states parking is restricted to the Caregivers.

Gordon noted there is a conflict with the October 21 meeting date and asked if any member of the committee in attendance today had an issue with changing the date to the 28<sup>th</sup>? There did not seem to be an issue with schedules.

Mike Fowler said he would get some templates together for the group to review. Budgets are tough, but he will do what he can within his budget. Gordon noted the long term vision is to develop the downtown.

The site walk ended at 9:00 a.m. in front of the Municipal Center.