

DOWNTOWN CROSSING: A Summary of Concerns Regarding Project Planning and Performance, and Compliance with TIGER II Criteria

New Haven Urban Design League
February 2012

Phase 1 Public Improvements (Tiger 2)



City of New Haven final plan Phase 1

A HIGHWAY REBUILT, NOT REMOVED

Table of Contents

Section I:	Introduction and Project Background	Page 2
Section II:	Concerns about the Current New Haven Downtown Crossing Plan	Page 7
	A. How highway removal projects work and how this project fails	Page 7
	B. The needs and prospects of the four areas most closely related to the project: Downtown, the Yale Medical Area (YMA), the Hill neighborhood, and Union Station	Page 11
	C. Parking expansion in New Haven: and the special history of the Air Rights Garage (ARG)	Page 14
Section III:	The TIGER II Criteria and Deficiencies in New Haven Downtown Crossing Plan	Page 18
Section IV:	Conclusions and Recommendation	Page 24
Appendices	pages 26-29	



Former Oak Street Neighborhood



Redevelopment Demolition



Current RT 34 and Air Rights Garage

Statement of Belief

The New Haven Urban Design League believes the quality of the built environment is critical to human happiness and a civil society.

Mission

The New Haven Urban Design League was founded by citizens devoted to protecting and enhancing New Haven's natural assets and urban design through research, education, and advocacy. The League works to improve the quality of life in New Haven by supporting projects that sustain the culture, beauty, utility, and economic health of the city -- both in its neighborhoods and in its region. The League seeks to strengthen the civic culture that is the foundation for good government, good planning, and good development.

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SECTION I -- Executive Summary

The Problem

Vision documents for the Downtown Crossing project, and the publicly expressed hopes of New Haven city officials, set laudable objectives for changing an unsafe sprawling auto-centric area into a compact and bustling people centric neighborhood by eliminating separated thoroughfares and by expanding connectivity. However, technical engineering documents submitted at this stage of the design fail to meet these objectives, jeopardizing its suitability for TIGER II funding, even unwittingly undermining the program by falling prey to those who would like to see its termination in the current divisive political climate.

Despite expressions to the contrary:

- 1) Limited access separated thoroughfares are not eliminated, and
- 2) Connectivity is not expanded.

Of particular note are the following problems:

- The limited-access separated sunken thoroughfare persists.
- There are no new cross streets, and therefore no additional connectivity in the proposed design.
- The street level arterials on either side of the highway are expanded, and the resulting sunken and street level combination is an even more formidable barrier to connectivity than the previous conformation.
- From these fundamental deficiencies, additional planning and performance failures ensue, which cast doubt on the projects suitability for the TIGER II program.

These problems and deficiencies are not insurmountable. They can be quickly corrected. This paper will identify the problems in detail, and suggest ways to address them that meet the criteria of the TIGER II program. The goal achieved would be nothing less than a prime prototypical project that Federal and local officials can point to with pride as the best exemplar for continuing the TIGER program throughout the city, the state and the country.

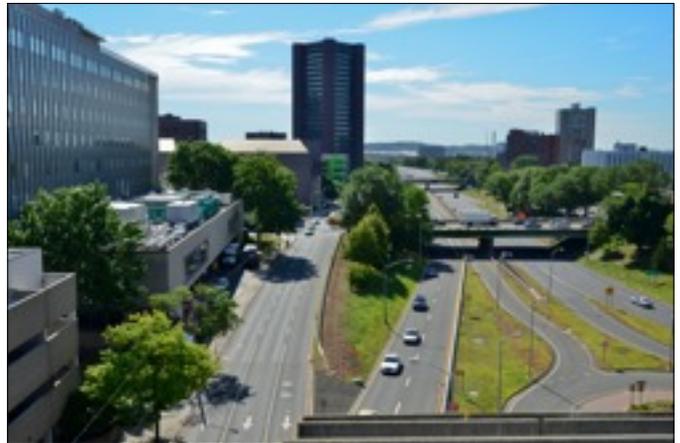


Fig. 1 Oak Street Connector and MLK Boulevard, current conditions

Background

In 2004, the New Haven Urban Design League introduced the idea of removing the Route 34 Highway Connector to the New Haven residents and City officials. The benefits of recapturing eleven valuable acres of downtown land and reconnecting a City that had been cut asunder in the 1960s by the "Highway to Nowhere" were clear, as were the engineering and financial challenges the City would face in undertaking the project.

An initial benefits and engineering analysis was developed by Clough and Harbour Associates for the South Central Regional Council of Governments in 2006. The Clough and Harbour report looked at maximizing the amount of useable space above ground by rebuilding the current highway trench to accommodate parking and travel lanes to access it, covering this with a platform, on top of which a mixed use development could be created. There was broad support for the study's general concepts (Fig 2).

Public comment focused on the need for open space, people friendly streets, and a request that the feasibility of two-way avenues, rather than one-way avenues, be investigated in the study's next steps.

The City was awarded an additional \$5 million in federal funds to continue a study to be administered by the Connecticut Department of Transportation. In addition to civil and traffic engineers, the new study would require the involvement of urban planners. The Connecticut DOT did not have formal standards for urban planners, and until these standards were established, a Request for Proposals could not be issued. After a year and a half of work in house and with the City of New Haven, the DOT completed these standards and the RFP could be issued.

In the meantime, Carter Winstanley, a prominent local developer and property manager, hired his own team of engineers to evaluate faster ways to build-out the parcel across North Frontage Road from his largest holding in the area, 300 George Street. (Winstanley also controls three other properties nearby.) Winstanley Enterprises proposed that a 160 foot wide building be constructed directly in the highway trench, eliminating the time and costs of building a

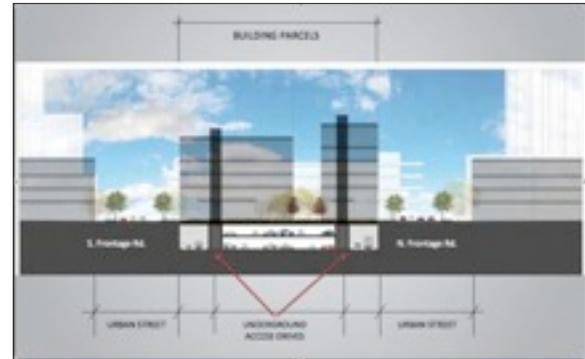


Fig. 2 Above, Clough and Harbour Plan, 2006, with underground parking and service lanes.

Fig 3 Below, Winstanley Enterprises Plan, 2009, with above ground parking which reduces space for commercial use and creates a long streetscape with no active uses.



platform. The result was a plan (Fig. 3) that would place a new 800 car above-ground garage adjacent to the already existing 2,600 car Air Rights Garage (ARG).

Looked at through the lens of the initial benefits and engineering analysis by Clough and Harbour, the Winstanley plan is deficient in three ways. Without decking over the highway with a platform, the advantages of using the trench for parking and access lanes, and maximizing usable space was eliminated. The design hampered, perhaps eliminated, the potential for reconnecting the streetscape in a way that would promote a healthy urban development. And finally, in a zone already burdened with poor air quality, severe pedestrian safety failures, severe traffic congestion, and a degraded street-level environment, no serious consideration was given to the effect of the Winstanley plan on these problems.

Initially, however, the costs and negative impacts of the Winstanley concept kept it sidelined. When the TIGER program was announced, the sidelining of the Carter Winstanley plan came to an end. Seeing an opportunity to start the ball rolling on plans for Downtown Crossing/Route 34, the City of New Haven adopted the Winstanley plan, with some modest modification, as the basis of its "shovel ready" project in its application for a TIGER grant. The first application made in 2009 was turned down. A follow-up application was successful and the City was awarded the grant in 2010.

As flawed as the Carter Winstanley biotech development plan was, it had -- and we believe still has -- potential to become an important component of a redeveloped and revitalized Route 34 East/Downtown Crossing, a component that would be consistent with the goals of both the TIGER grant and the City of New Haven's own stated goals for this project. But for that to be accomplished, much work must first be done. Adequate traffic, transit, market and environmental studies must be completed. These studies would provide the foundation for the development of a regulating plan detailing street grids, zoning and land use, not only for the Downtown Crossing parcels, but for the project's larger urban setting. In short, New Haven needs to generate a detailed, workable vision for this now desolate area, and help the Carter Winstanley project fit into it.

In order to understand why we are at the point we are at now, it is instructive to review the public process for Route 34/Downtown Crossing in New Haven. The City of New Haven commenced public workshops in 2009. After 55 meetings with constituency groups and the general public in two years, where community groups have consistently beat the drum for safe streets, improved transportation options, reduced vehicular traffic, clean air, sustainable land use, mixed uses, public spaces and a human scale project -- neither the lead developer or the City of New Haven have moved from the original car-centric conception of the project. (Fig. 4) Essentially, the highway is being re-configured and re-built rather than removed -- an outcome that does more harm than good.



Fig. 4 City of New Haven Plan for Downtown Crossing, 2010. Yellow highlights added lanes on surface streets, green indicates disturbed areas to be rebuilt after construction, highway geometries persist.

In response to this problematic plan, in the Spring and Summer of 2011, community groups organized a Safe Streets Resolution to be brought to the Board of Aldermen, and the League organized a Community Workshop, "Re-envisioning Downtown Crossing" to explore ways to improve the plan. A brief description of each effort follows:

The **Safe-Streets Resolution** met with vehement opposition from City Hall, which organized a counter-protest about jobs, as to imply that the two unassailable goals of urban development were in conflict with each other. The Safe-Streets Resolution did not result in any fundamental rethinking of the prime planning flaws -- the location of a new garage and the number of lanes being planned in the roads to serve it. Instead, mitigation measures -- such as raised traffic tables to slow down traffic -- have been introduced (Fig.5). Lane widths have been narrowed from 11 feet to 10 feet, but have not been reduced in number. Now at an average of 50 feet in width, the roads are clearly dangerous to all users (Appendix A, Peter Swift studies on street widths and pedestrian casualty).

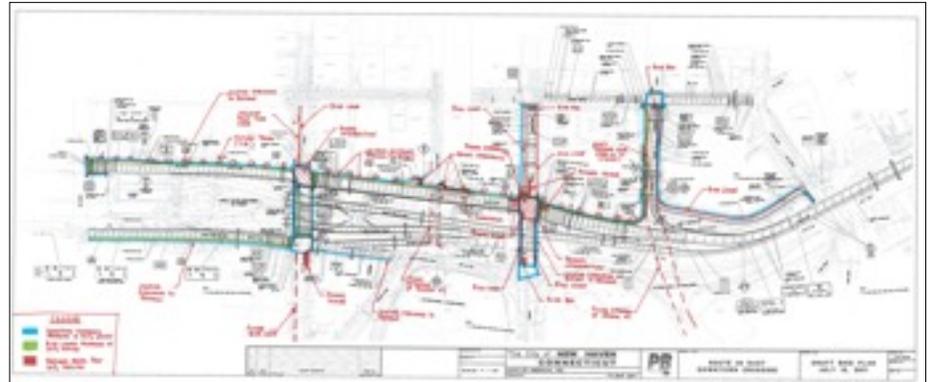


Fig. 5 City of New Haven Revised plan, July 2011, showing extended bike lanes, raised tables at two intersections, and two bump-outs. The lanes have been reduced in width, but not in number, and no cross streets have been added.

A **Community Workshop** was organized and sponsored by the New Haven Urban Design League in partnership with many community groups. A team of architects, planners, landscape architects, and engineers, who donated over \$45,000 in *pro-bono* services, worked with New Haven residents to explore ways to improve the project. The Workshop developed three core concepts -- a residential esplanade; a mixed-use infill plan; and a multi-way, mixed-use boulevard (Fig. 6, 7, 8). We have reviewed these concepts with the City, who remain fixed on their current plan. We have made numerous, unsuccessful, requests to meet with the Commissioner of the Connecticut DOT and Carter Winstanley to do the same.

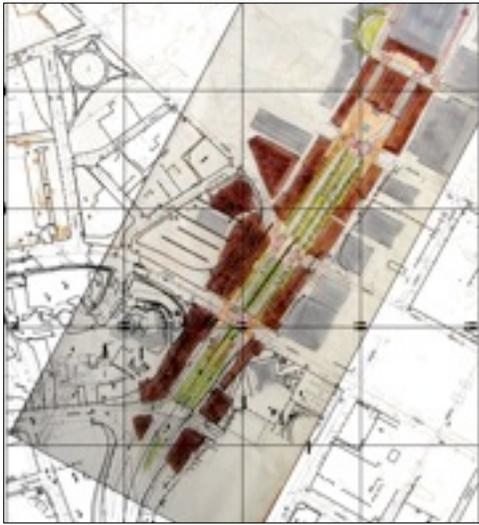


Fig. 6 Mixed-use infill plan, establishing cross-streets, a variety of lot sizes to support opportunity for both small and large developers to participate in the project while also creating a mixture of physical scale to make the streets inviting and interesting. Concept, Ben Northrup.

The pattern that emerges in all these public interactions is that despite a time public consuming process there has been limited engagement on the part of the City with the specifics of the suggestions and concerns raised by the public. This holds true whether the process is initiated by the City (55 meetings) or community groups (Safe Streets resolution or the League's Community Workshop.) The League is currently seeking funds to hire civil and traffic engineers to review the concepts developed in the Community Workshop, and to provide a benefit and cost analysis of one of the proposals, compared to the City's current plan.

While the League continues to support removing the highway spur, we do believe that the plan, which is currently at its 30% design phase, needs improvements if it is to fulfill the TIGER II guidelines and the needs of this community. The TIGER II project is a critical opportunity for New Haven. Removing the highway spur is essential to recapturing valuable land and repairing New Haven's most defacing scar from the 1960's Urban Renewal era - - a tough, inflexible scar that has isolated the Hill neighborhood and the Yale Medical Area from the city-center and Union Station. Unfortunately, the current plans replace the scar with more of the same kind of unhealthy tissue.

The Downtown Crossing project is critical to the City's future economic and social well being -- it demands better planning. Its proximity to the train station, city center, and medical district makes a multi-use, multi-modal transportation plan both feasible and urgent priorities. Government officials have told us that we have to "swallow the bitter pill" of this grossly impoverished plan. We don't feel that \$30 million in public funds, (and perhaps an addition \$100 million in State incentives for a biotech company to lease space in the Winstanley building) should be used to create a plan that fails. While we understand that this is Phase One of a multi phase project, and that its completion will require much more investment and work in the future, we also understand that that Phase One is the foundation of the project, and as such it will in many ways determine what can, and can not, be developed from it in the future.



Ideas from the Community Workshop

Fig. 7, Right, Urban Esplanade plan, Robert Orr, FAIA. Preliminary evaluations of the Esplanade concept indicate that it would both garner the most land for new buildings (brown) while also creating a great public greenspace.

Fig. 8, Left, Mixed-Use Infill plan, Ben Northrup, watercolor by Wladyslaw Prosol. Both in the Downtown Crossing project zone, and adjacent development zones, buildings with strong street walls and active uses shape a walkable place. A park is located at the essential link between Temple Street and Congress Avenue.

SECTION II: CONCERNS ABOUT THE CURRENT NEW HAVEN DOWNTOWN CROSSING PLAN

Downtown Crossing, at this 30% design stage, falls far short of the criteria of the TIGER II program, and fails to meet the city's needs for a transformative project. To establish a context for analysis, a review of these topics follows.

Section II. A. How and why highway removal projects work and how this project fails.

Section II. A. 1. Highway Removal, Connectivity, and the Potential for Traffic Demand Reductions

The logic and benefits of urban highway removal has spurred many cities to undertake these complex projects. San Francisco, California choose not to rebuild the elevated Embarcadero highway after it was destroyed by an earthquake. Traffic volumes along the Embarcadero dropped from 100,000 to 50,000 cars per day when it was replaced by an urban boulevard. Similarly, traffic on San Francisco's Central Freeway was reduced from 90,000 vehicles per day to 57,000 when the high was removed. Milwaukee's highway removal reduced traffic from 59,000 to 19,000 vehicle per day (Appendix C).

That a highway removal can reduce traffic is counter to what many people might expect. But the most salient fact in all these projects, and indeed what makes them possible, is that traffic counts have dropped by 50 - 70% when highways have been removed. Two factors contributed to these reductions:

- a). Limited access highways act as *collectors of traffic, concentrating vehicles*. A study by Norman Garrick, *et al*, for the Transportation Research Board describes this paradox, and how different street configurations create or prevent congestion.¹ As the saying goes, "Build a highway, harvest congestion." In New Haven, this tendency is exacerbated by the pattern of one-way streets pushing local traffic onto the Connector, increasing its traffic volumes. The City is now starting a study of one-way to two-way street conversions that will, along with removing the highway, eliminate a generator of traffic congestion;
- b). Urban street grids with a high density of intersections per square mile, work to disperse traffic and prevent congestion because "travelers have increased route choice " and they can travel more direct routes to their destinations.² Rebuilding cross-streets and reducing the size of super-blocks is the first and most important step to reducing traffic volumes in Downtown Crossing and it larger context.

¹ Freeway Teardown and Braess' Paradox: Empirical Evidence from North American Case Studies, Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting 2012, and Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board, 6 July 2011

² Victoria Transportation Policy Institute, "Roadway Connectivity." <http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm116.htm>

The traffic projections used by the City and the Connecticut DOT are based on a 1% growth in traffic per year, rather than reductions. If, as the City claims, it actually plans to remove the highway, it is hard to say exactly which factors contribute to this assumption that traffic will increase. On the other hand, if the Downtown Crossing plan is, essentially, a plan to re-build a highway to serve massively expanded parking, both for Phase One and for subsequent development in the immediate zone and larger context, a projection of traffic growth makes sense.

City planners have argued that the lack of any cross-streets being rebuilt in Phase One is the primary reason that extra street-level lanes are needed, and that these extra lanes could be removed in future phases, once the two cross-streets are built. This is problematic and contrary to the essence of the TIGER II criteria to establish a "State of Good Repair." The consequences for human health and safety of 50 foot wide streets are negative. To remove the streets in the future is costly -- extremely so because the infrastructure for power, water and sewage lines is generally established when the curb is set. And because the lanes would be removed sometime in the future after the buildings are in place, no square footage could be gained for structures -- the benefit of this expensive rebuilding would be solely to improve the project's impact on health and safety.

While finding a way to build the cross-streets in Phase One is critical, it is important to establish reliable facts about the traffic and congestion impacts of different build-out scenarios before finalizing any plan. The League has recommended that the City consult with Smart Mobility, a professional practice whose engineers and statisticians have exceptional knowledge about the performance of urban grids, and whose work is generated from standard DOT models. From preliminary conversations with Smart Mobility and the City (including a conference call on September 6, 2011), we understand that reductions in traffic volumes comparable to the 50% reductions achieved in other highway removals could be achieved here. *Again, this means that we could be building roads that are unnecessary, while not building connections that are.*

Section II.A. 2. Mixed Use Zoning for Traffic Reduction

Further traffic reductions could be achieved if a grid with high connectivity was built to support a mixed-use plan with, in addition to medical offices, laboratories and retail, a significant amount of housing was included. A place designed to support a walk-to-work and walk-to-shop way of life reduces the need for transportation. As Lewis Mumford said, the best transportation plan is the one that reduces the need for transportation. A well designed urban street and grid also provides the best environment for successful places to live, work and play.

These values are not just a by-product of the grid, but its purpose. This is the essence of why mixed use environments work so well. They are economical, self-sustaining, active and safe for most of the 24 hour day, and create a rich social realm of neighbors and businesses who feel ownership of the place and share mutual benefits. The Oak Street neighborhood that was destroyed for the Connector was this sort of vital place. While our goal is not to recreate its physical



Fig. 9 Construction of the Oak Street Connector. Over 60% of Downtown was demolish during the 1960s Redevelopment Era, and streets where rebuilt in one-way circuits around super-blocks, eliminating connectivity. The current plan for Downtown Crossing Phase One adds no connections beyond the minimal ones built in the 1960s, above.

form and way of life, we do need to embrace the basic principles that made it vital, but re-shape it to meet the needs of today's new economy and population.

A sustainable and livable plan would study and create the optimal balance of uses (residential, retail, business, institutional, civic and open space) within the repurposed Connector and its extended context to reduce transportation infrastructure and create a living neighborhood, that could also serve the medical and research needs of the larger New Haven and Connecticut population.

The important task of connecting the Hill neighborhood, the Yale Medical Area, Downtown and Union Station depends not simply on establishing the physical connection through new cross-streets, but planning for a variety of uses along them. Comprehensive plans developed by cities that establish over-lapping neighborhood nodes, each with diverse land uses, work to connect neighborhoods through a vital stream of uses along walking routes.



Fig. 10 Diagram of walkable areas of the downtown (red and black blocks) obstacles to movement (black diagonal blocks) that include the Air Rights Garage upper left and the RT 34 highway bridge over the railroad tracks middle right. The large zones of available land, including the Connector, (violet stripes) are dominated by super-blocks which concentrate traffic and reduce mobility.

Section II. A. 3. Transit Oriented Development for Vehicular Demand Reduction and Economic and Environmental Equity

One difference between the past development patterns of the Oak Street neighborhood and the present is the need now for even greater density if we are to accommodate the growth of Downtown, Yale Medical Area expansion, and create public space in the Downtown Crossing area. The high demand for land, combined with its limited supply provides an ideal opportunity for establishing a transit development zone -- one with clear zoning requirements for Parking and Traffic Demand Management, and a transit system to support it. While a transit development zone could be accomplished with enhanced bus service, greater economic and environmental returns could be gained through a streetcar system.

Street cars have delivered substantial Returns on Investment (ROI) to their communities -- Little Rock's ROI was 920.41%, Portland's ROI was 7501.12% (Fig. 11). The City is studying the potential for starting a streetcar system in New Haven. Route 34 could be the ideal place to start it. Creating a Transit Finance District would be easier to accomplish in the Connector area (and along Route 34 West) because the land open to development is publicly owned.

An effective and convenient transit system is needed in Downtown Crossing for the people who live near it. Pollution levels are high. Emissions from vehicles along Route 34, emissions from thousands cold starts by cars in thousands of

parking spaces (10,000 in the YMA, 25,000 in Downtown), emissions at Union Station and its rail repair yard, and emissions from power plants serving the hospitals all combine with the City's overall "F" rated air quality to create a district with especially poor air quality.

Because the zone has been a highway, empty of buildings and people, bus transit service has been thin and poorly integrated. An Environmental Justice community, the Hill neighborhood is a low income, predominately minority area with poor access to health care, and high rates of unemployment. New Haven's Workforce Alliance has identified lack of adequate transportation as the single greatest obstacle to employment. In this context, the focus of Downtown Crossing on maximizing infrastructure to support Single Occupancy Vehicles use does not address the needs of the largest residential population near the project, nor does it offer alternative means of transportation for the commuters it purports to serve.³

Air quality has not been adequately addressed in the plan for the Downtown Crossing project, or in the National Environmental Protection Act report (NEPA) written to support it. The NEPA report, which arrived at a finding of "no impact" is deficient. The report examines only the impact of rebuilding the roads, starting at the beginning of construction, and ending before the project opens for use. Not only does this exclude the air quality impact of the vehicles and garages the new roads are designed to serve, it also excludes the impact of full build out of the underutilized land in the Connector Area and along Route 34 West, whose growth the project is meant to foster. The NEPA report is irrelevant at best. It is important to recognize, however, that if the Downtown Crossing project was built to reduce parking, traffic and congestion, to support walk-to-work, to plan for transit to serve a strategic percent of mode share, a revised, full and accurate NEPA report could then probably rightly claim, "no adverse air quality impact."

In summary, tools, such as best practices for demand reduction outlined above, are not being used in the New Haven Downtown Crossing plan, resulting in lost opportunity for capturing the full potential for increases in economic development and connectivity between neighborhoods, and for decreases in pollution and traffic congestion.

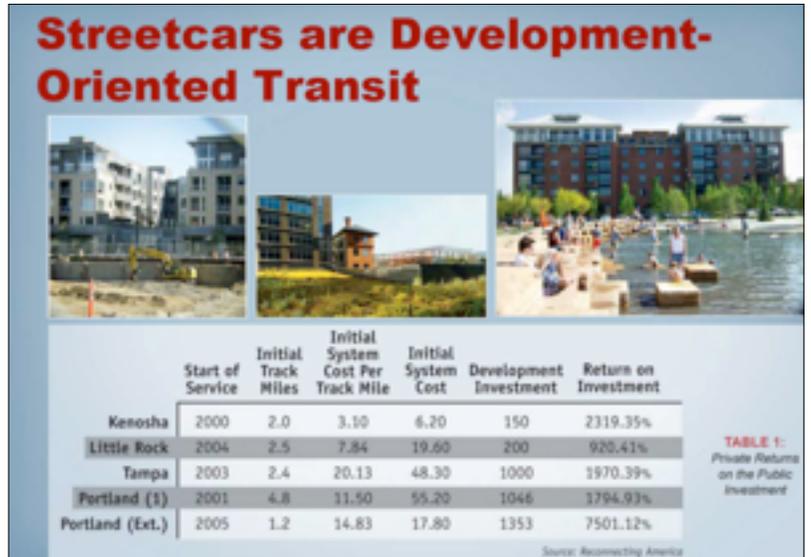


Fig. 11 Streetcars and Return on Investment, chart from Reconnecting America.

³ "Equitable Development Tool Kit" PolicyLink, 2008 http://policylink.info/documents/TODTool_FINAL.pdf

II. B. Needs and prospects of the four areas most closely related to the project: Downtown, the Yale Medical Area (YMA), the Hill neighborhood, and Union Station

Section II. B.1. Downtown

During the 1960's Urban Redevelopment era, 60% of downtown New Haven was demolished. The Oak Street Connector consumed a large part of downtown, as did the widened roads and parking lots and parking garages built as part of the car-oriented plan. Conversion to institutional uses has also reduced land used for retail, often in the areas most where it is most needed. Still, Downtown New Haven has great potential for retail growth. In recent years, this potential, and how to tap it, has not been widely understood. Downtown's business improvement district, the Town Green Special Services District (TGSSD) has initiated a study, which shows that the market for retail growth here is similar to West Hartford's -- one of the most successful downtowns in Connecticut.

The task for revitalizing Downtown entails working to create the "critical mass" needed for a fully functioning and prosperous Downtown (that is, expanding the zone), and to repair zones where the retail environment is harmed by unsupportive development patterns and poor street level design. The Downtown Crossing project is vital to this effort of retail expansion and streetscape improvements.

Specific plans ensuring that retail uses continue along and through the Downtown Crossing project area, supported by easy way-finding, walking and transit connections need to be developed prior to final plans, and, especially, Land Disposition Agreements.

Section II. B.2. The Yale Medical Area

The planned merger of Yale New Haven Hospital (YNHH) and the Hospital of Saint Raphael (HSR) will offer a tremendous opportunity to rethink the ways these two great institutions function internally, and how their physical plans will change over time. At this time, only preliminary ideas have been explored for how to effect the physical merger -- it is anticipated that the need to build a new "bed tower" will be unnecessary in the near future because the bed shortage at YNHH can be addressed by the surplus of beds at HSR.

The merger of the two hospitals may eliminate the need to construct a "bed tower" in the future, but the Yale Medical Area, the zone's largest employer, is poised to grow significantly. The designation of YNHH as a Comprehensive Cancer Center is accelerating the growth of medical and laboratory facilities, both by the hospitals, medical schools and by private research firms whose work is supported by proximity to the Comprehensive Cancer Center. YMA planners anticipate that the demand for laboratory and research space will outstrip the land open for development, so much so that moving the Yale School of Nursing to West Haven is under consideration. In an era when medicine is moving towards practice by interdisciplinary teams, removing a key component, nursing, from a shared campus, would be a set back for this, and an inconvenience for the staff, faculty and students of the Yale School of Nursing.



Fig. 12 Downtown demolition during redevelopment. Expanding Downtown and creating critical mass is essential to its viability as a local and regional retail destination.

Despite the increased efficiencies that are expected from the merger, demand for land is expected to increase. Creating a master plan for the new, combined medical area should be a requirement for applying to receive public funds or public lands. Because land in the Downtown Crossing zone is limited, a master plan needs to prioritize land for:

- uses which stabilize Downtown,
- housing to support a walk-to-work environment and 18 hour-a-day active zone,
- uses related to clinical care,
- uses which employ area residents,
- businesses which serve the needs of area residents and employees.
- research laboratory and office space.

These considerations are essential to making New Haven's Education and Medical economy bloom. The Yale Medical Area is unattractive. It is dominated by cars, garages and industrial-styled hospital buildings. Economic competitiveness depends on attracting patients, faculty, staff, and students. A well-built environment that is safe, healthful and attractive is essential to this goal. Current research shows that highly skilled professionals now entering the workforce value urban environments that offer benefits to their quality of life.



Fig. 13 The Oak Street Connector and the Yale Medical Area, ca. 1970, prior to construction of Air Rights Garage. Hill Neighborhood in foreground.

Despite this national trend, YNHH is working on an assumption that a large majority of its workforce will commute by SOV. To accommodate this assumption, a suburban standard of 5 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet is being applied to its projects. Not only does this plan create hazardous streets and poor air quality, in an environmental justice community, it is also unsustainable because it wastes valuable land, and it provides no transportation benefits for people who live in the area.

Section II. B.3 The Hill Neighborhood

The Oak Street Connector isolated the Hill neighborhood from the rest of the city, and played a major role in the neighborhood's decline, especially when coupled with the deterioration of the City's industrial base. Appropriate levels of local traffic that once brought customers to stores along Congress Avenue and other arterials declined as it was rerouted through the Connector. Administrative offices for YNHH have replaced most businesses at the strategic Howard and Congress Avenue intersection. These roadways have less traffic than they need if the stores and businesses serving the neighborhood are to make a comeback. Institutional expansion and land-banking have shrunk the residential portions of the neighborhood by more than 25% in the last 15 years - further reducing its viability as a self-sufficient and convenient place to live. The difficulties of living here generate instability - 25% of its population changes each year. Breaking down the community's isolation, and improving the quality of life by restoring places that support stores and business are the first tasks for planners. Beyond the specific benefits to the people who live

here, preventing further deterioration of the neighborhood is essential to the city's economic health. The Hill was one of a number of neighborhoods that has seen an absolute decline in property values, even while other areas of the city have seen increases. The declining property values inhibits investment by homeowners and landlords.

The Hill is a place with few conveniences, one small park, and open-space limited to school grounds and a cemetery. Reconnecting this neighborhood to the city is an urgent task. Accomplishing this requires the same urban tonics that are necessary to make Downtown Crossing, the Medical Area, function and thrive. Specifically, a mixed use plan, and transit growth to link the Downtown through the Medical zone to the Hill.



Figs. 14 a, b, c. The Hill Neighborhood -- Left, Vernon Street houses with Yale Medical Area parking looming in the backyards; center, historic house on Davenport and Vernon Street; Right, Yale Medical Area facility on corner of Howard and Congress Avenues -- a place where the residential and institutional communities meet.

Even if every cross-street was built out in Downtown Crossing's Phase One, the streets would have little benefit for Hill residents if consideration of their needs is not part of the planning stages of Downtown Crossing Phase One. As of yet, Hill residents have not been brought into the process in a meaningful fashion. Like the Medical Area and the Downtown Crossing zone, the neighborhood has no master plan for development. The Downtown Crossing project is weakened by this lack of solid master planning -- every step is *ad hoc*, problems are created, and opportunities lost. This weakness is particularly evident in the area of transportation, where an equitable transportation system that was built to serve commuters coming in and neighborhood residents going out would make significant difference in the Hill's potential for revitalization.

New models for planning hospitals and healthy neighborhoods make this a particularly good moment to look at comprehensive planning for the Yale Medical Area and the Hill. Cities like Miami, Richmond and Louisville have undertaken planning projects aimed at developing plans that are mutually beneficial to institutions and their host neighborhoods -- in essence, embracing urban planning as vital part of the hospital's health care mission. The Downtown Crossing project, combined with the hospital merger, could provide a spur to reassessment and planning.

Innovation needs to be used, and it can be, to work on a combined neighborhood and institutional plan (see: [Hospital Design: From Barrier to Connector](#) and [Bon Secours Asks Neighbors to Help Redesign Community](#)). YNHH has 3,000 plus employees who, as customers, could both benefit from and contribute to the revitalization of the the Hill's commercial corridors, if plans where designed to promote the location of retail and business in places convenient for both communities.

Section II. B. 4. Union Station

Union Station has also been isolated from the city center and the Yale Medical Area by the Connector and by large super blocks that confuse way-finding and inhibit walking to the Downtown and the YMA. Federal funds have been awarded, not only for Downtown Crossing, but for a Transit Oriented Development at the train station, for a street car study, and for rebuilding Church Street South, a former public housing complex across from the train station, which now serves Section 8 tenants. These projects have the potential to solve many planning problems if they are coordinated. At this point, though, basic measures, such as establishing a direct route from the train station to Church Street are not part of the plans. The current study for the street car shows a proposed route across the Downtown Crossing project, but the potential of the streetcar to reduce parking demand, and to be funded by a transit district plan, is not being pursued.



Figs. 15.a & b. Connecting Union Station to New Haven's Downtown, the Hill and the Yale Medical Area, Community Workshop, July 2011, concept by George Knight AIA Concept, renderings by Wladyslaw Prosol.

Section II.C. Parking expansion in New Haven, and the special history of the Air Rights Garage (ARG).

New Haven land consumed by off-street parking has grown 200% since 1953 as shown in maps prepared by the University of Connecticut Transportation Institute, Norman Garrick, *et al* (Figs.16 a, b). During this period, New Haven, like other high auto use cities, suffered economic decline, grand list shrinkage, job loss and population loss. In a study of parking in Hartford, Connecticut and Cambridge, Massachusetts, Garrick *et al*, found a direct correlation between parking development and this roster of urban damage.⁴ Parking lots and garages employ few people, are a nuisance to pedestrians, and they are dead zones at night, and even sometimes during the day. In New Haven, 40% of the city's pollution is created by vehicles. A significant reduction in vehicular traffic would result in a significant reduction in air pollution. Even if in the future, if every car was a clean car, the negative effects of SOV-based transportation on municipal tax revenue reduction, job loss, broken urban fabric, highway expansion, transit disinvestment, traffic safety and congestion would still be a problem.

⁴ C. McCahill and N. Garrick. "Influence of Parking Policy on Built Environment and Travel Behavior in Two New England Cities, 1960 to 2007." *Transportation Research Record* 2187 (2010): 123-130; and see chart at: http://www.christophermccahill.com/uploads/9/0/2/4/9024227/trb2012_parking.pdf

The Air Rights Garage was developed in the early 1970s to serve YNHH. Land across from the hospital in the un-completed highway was already used at that time for surface parking, and YNHH looked for ways to maximize this use with structured parking using air rights over the planned highway -- at the time a new development concept.



Figs. 16 a & b. Norman Garrick et al, Off-street parking expansion in New Haven, 1952 - 2008

After finding that they did not have the resources to finance the project, Hospital administrators turned to the City for help, asking that the garage be built as a public facility. The City agreed and it was built and is still maintained by the New Haven Parking Authority. The plan required Connecticut DOT approval to build in the road bed of a state highway. DOT was reluctant to approve the project, knowing it would be hazardous both to build, and to operate. DOT's evaluation has proved right -- the area around the garage is especially hazardous for drivers and pedestrians. However, the presidents of the Hospital and Yale University prevailed on Connecticut's Governor to add his support to the campaign to obtain DOT's approval of the ARG, and their combined efforts were successful.

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection proved more prescient, and harder to persuade than DOT. In an evaluation that was ahead of its time, the DEP Commissioner found that a garage this large (2,600 spaces), generating many cold starts, in an area with high traffic volumes, would cause enough congestion and pollution to be a generator of point source pollution. As such it would require an air permit. The city and the Hospital sponsored a bill to exempt the project from requiring an air permit. This bill passed the General Assembly (attached as a "rat" to another bill), and was signed by the Governor.

This history is not well known, and it is relevant to the Downtown Crossing project, in part because it was so swiftly forgotten. Although thousands more parking spaces have been constructed nearby (the YMA has over 12,000 off street spaces now, Downtown has more than 25,000) little thought was given to air quality impacts as the volume of parking increased, despite an EPA ranking of "F" quality air, and the costs of poor air quality to human health and the economy.

The ARG has proven to be dangerous to pedestrians, and it is the site of many traffic accidents. For most of the length of the two super blocks between Park and College streets, there are no sidewalks or active uses -- just highway-type traffic barriers. The current plan for the Winstanley project extends the inactive side-walls all the way to College Street. Rather than repairing a failing part of the city's built environment, the plan enlarges it (Fig. 17).

Furthering the damage, the City's planners have proposed locating entrances to a major garage planned for Phase Two along this same side of MLK Boulevard. This is a change from the 2006 Clough and Harbour Plan, which saw an opportunity to restore the urban ecology of this damaged zone by establishing a continuous ribbon of first floor retail along the newly created west side of North Frontage Road. The retail development of the Clough and Harbour plan would have activated the street with enjoyable and useful pedestrian activities -- a pattern of development which has both economic and safety benefits. Drivers slow down in these zones, because the presence of people in a place is clear. The many "eyes on the street" enhance public safety (Fig. 18). Recently renamed The Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the street's current plans -- lacking in equitable solutions for transportation, jobs, safety, and air quality -- divorces the project from its potential to be a place that embodies Dr. King's social and environmental justice legacy.

After choosing to allow the Winstanley development to set aside the Clough Harbor plan, the City concluded that the existing damage to the urban fabric here done by parking garages and loading docks could not be ameliorated, so a decision was made to further concentrate the vehicular uses (loading docks and structured parking) along MLK Boulevard. In addition to access from the trench level, the new garage will have its own surface-level ramps, generating traffic demand on the arterials. Millions of dollars are dedicated in this project to make it easier to drive into a congested zone, and solving the engineering complexities of building a new garage next to another giant garage. In effect, these uses, combined with the high traffic volumes, will make the newly built street a five lane service alley.

It is important to fix what is broken, and do no harm -- in this case, centering a plan on transit and walking, and building any additional parking underground so that streetscapes and a real boulevard, a boulevard in more than name alone, can be built.⁵

⁵. See Philip Langdon, "Swallowing hard, New Haven agrees to remove an expressway," *Better! Cities & Towns*, 9 Dec 2010. "One thing that should trouble anyone serious about urban design is city officials' (and consultants') misleading description of the two one-way streets that will carry the bulk of the traffic after the expressway is gone. Repeatedly they have promised that "urban boulevards" will be created. In fact, there will be no landscaped medians, so it's incorrect to call the new streets "boulevards." They will, according to current plans, simply be wide streets with three or four lanes for motor vehicle traffic, plus bike lanes and wide sidewalks."

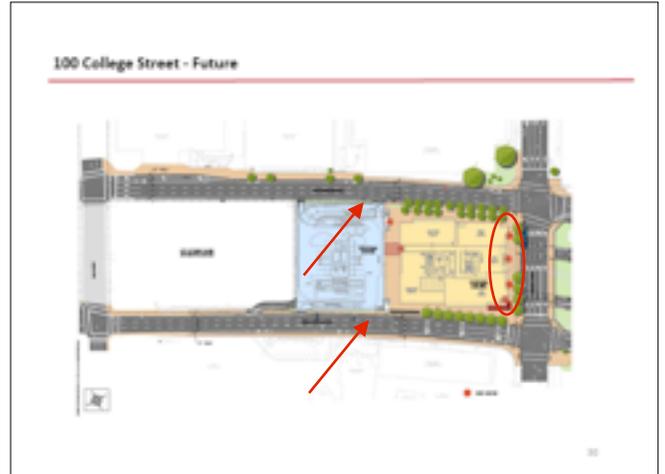
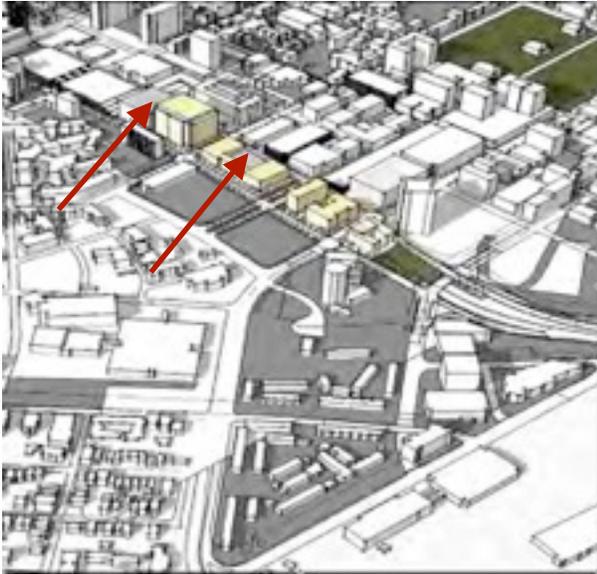


Fig.17 Winstanley Enterprise Plan for 100 College Street. The red oval marks the 160' facade that has active uses. The red arrows indicate the side-walls, each approximately 460' long, of the biotech building (yellow) and the new structured parking (blue), which have no active uses or sidewalks. These dead zone would connect with the Air Rights Garage (white area on left marks half of the structure), creating on two streets, for the length of two super blocks, an area with no active uses.



Fig. 18 Clough & Harbour concept for North Frontage Road (now MLK Boulevard), a continuous ribbon of retail activates the street, compensating for the existing garages and loading docks on the opposite side



The Air Rights Garage has set a pattern that has been hard to reverse -- that of parking leading to public transit disinvestment, leading to more parking (Fig.19). At this point, with our better knowledge ways, means, and benefits of development based on walking and transit, and the advantage of the Connector lands being in the public domain, the City has the means to re-balance its transportation system.

Fig. 19 City of New Haven, Concept for full build out of Downtown Crossing. Red arrows indicate additional parking, in a zone characterized by high rates of land used for parking. The plan does not develop robust transportation options to reduce parking demand in undeveloped areas (gray).

SECTION III: THE TIGER CRITERIA AND NEW HAVEN DOWNTOWN CROSSING DEFICIENCIES

° **State of Good Repair: Improving the condition of transportation facilities and systems, with particular emphasis on projects that minimize life cycle costs.**

The greatest missed opportunity for achieving a "State of Good Repair" is the lack of additional cross-streets being constructed in Phase One. That choice sets off a domino effect of destructive plans. As explained above (Sec. II.A.1), the lack of cross-streets leaves the existing super blocks as they are, rather than breaking them down into the denser web of intersections that would disperse traffic and improve connectivity for all users -- pedestrians, bikes, and vehicles.

As a result, instead of subtracting lanes and reducing street widths, the plan adds lanes. At an average of 50 feet wide, the new arterials will be dangerous for all users, especially pedestrians (Fig. 20). The proposed traffic tables will marginally ameliorate the hazard, but not without their own cost to build and maintain. The city's suggestion that the arterials would be narrowed in the future, once the cross-streets are constructed, clearly means the current work is temporary, and that tremendous costs would be added to the next phases.

While these dollar costs of deconstructing the TIGER II infrastructure and rebuilding narrower streets is problematic, the prospect of the TIGER II investment being left as is, as a hazardous and wasteful addition to a critical part of the city, is even more problematic. A way needs to be found to "build it right once."

° **Economic Competitiveness: Contributing to the economic competitiveness of the United States over the long term.**

Downtown and the YMA are poised for significant growth. Increasing numbers of people are looking to move into cities. Places with good jobs, thriving downtowns that support daily needs, and arts and entertainment activities, and walk-to-work livability are especially attractive to workers in the "knowledge economies." The contribution of Eds and Meds to the local and national economy is profound, and New Haven is situated to be both a leader in and beneficiary of its growth. In addition to the TIGER funds, the Eds and Meds sector of our economy is supported by many streams of public investment, among these, the National Institute for Health, National Cancer Institute, Medicare, and Medicaid, and every tax payer in Connecticut whose contributions support Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for the Hospitals and Yale University.

The current TIGER proposal does not build an environment that fully and effectively serves the growing economy. These problems limit the value of the TIGER II investment:

- land which could be used for retail, business, residential and hospital uses is being dedicated to expanded roadways and parking,

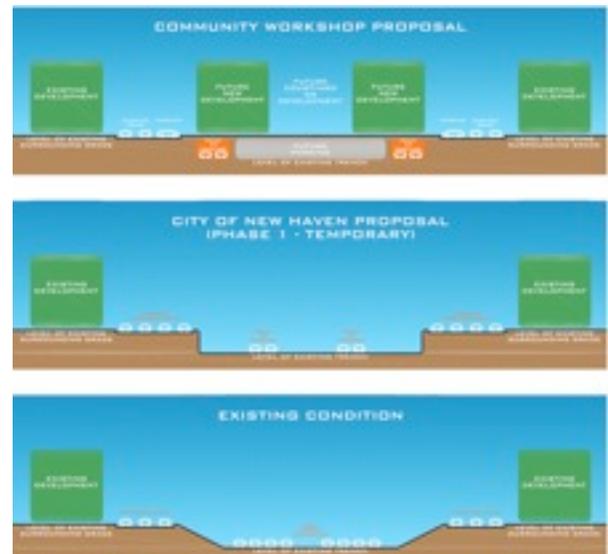


Fig. 20 Schematic comparison of existing conditions, the TIGER Phase One proposal, and the Community Workshop concept for maximizing usable land and reducing street widths by building parking underground.

- good stewardship of this limited land resource is necessary for any city, but especially a city facing debt payments and pension obligations that will require additional revenues from development and other property taxes, grants or PI-LOT funds every year for the next 20 years equivalent to those expected from the Winstanley development -- \$1.43 million,

- The projected \$1.43 million annual revenue may not be gained. The biotech company slated to lease the building is now considering competing offers from two other states. The State of Connecticut is ready to offer the company an additional incentive of \$100 million dollars to locate here. This uncertainty is reflected in the developer's estimate of the size of the building as being between 225,000 and 400,00 square feet,

- The use of land to support vehicular uses will limit tax revenues and job development,

- The use of land to support vehicular uses will perpetuate and propel further car-oriented development,

- The reduction of land available to buildings occupied by people will require hard choices about which useful developments to exclude, curtailing the value increases that derive from a full and complex mixture of uses in an area,

- In their application, the City claimed that the plan would increase the value of the highway land from \$0 to \$45 per square foot. A far greater gain would be captured through effective TOD and streetcar development. For instance, streetcar-created land value increases of 900 - 7,000% have been demonstrated (Fig. 11, page 19),

- The massive subsidy to re-engineer the highway to support a new private 800 car parking garage does not enhance transportation options for anyone but the commuters who will use the new garage. The subsidy does not enhance transportation options and job opportunities for people who live nearby in the Hill, a place with high rates of unemployment.

° **Livability: Fostering livable communities through place-based policies and investments that increase transportation choices and access to transportation services for people in communities across the United States.**

An aesthetically pleasing environment is central to livability -- people gravitate to beautiful and exciting places. The City acknowledges this value in the TIGER II Benefit and Cost analysis (p.15), under "Economic Benefits Not Included," where the application notes that "the general character of the area will usually become more picturesque, with retail and commercial activities enhancing streetscapes." In Phase One, the only section of a building frontage with retail and commercial activity is the facade of the new Winstanley building facing College Street. This facade is an approximately 160' long, and stretches from South Frontage Road to MLK Boulevard. Along these two major arterials, the project has no active uses. The combined 460' length of the Biotech building and its garage present blank walls or structured parking, none of which is either picturesque or aesthetically pleasing.

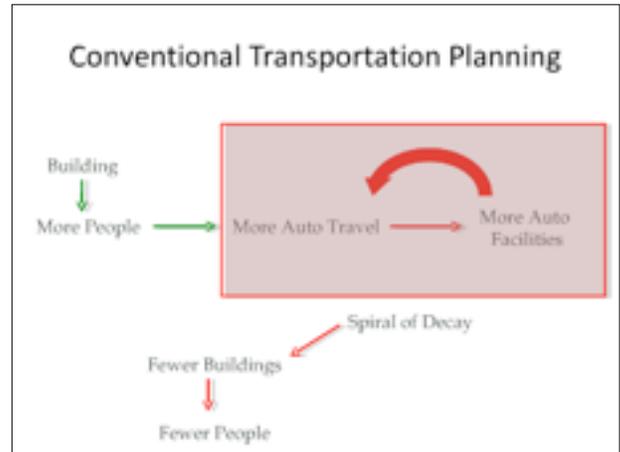


Fig. 21 Norman Garrick, diagram of the "The Spiral of Decay" in Conventional Transportation Planning, see featured presentation at <http://www.engr.uconn.edu/~garrick/>

The design of 100 College Street building has been unpopular with the public, and though critiqued in the press its bulky glass facade and heavy metal penthouse remain unreformed. (Appendix C) It is a building that does not give back quality for the value of the public investment made to allow its construction. (Fig. 22)

The project's increased transportation choices for bike riders is expected to increase this mode share from 1.0% to 1.5%. Studies have shown that bike infrastructure improves safety for all users. So while the mode share shift for biking is small, it provides other clear and positive gains for the City.

The mode share for walking is expected to be very modest -- an increase from 8.0% to 11%. (Fig. 23) This could be higher if the project included housing or more local hiring to support a walk to work environment. Contrary to the description in the City's TIGER II application, the project adds no new connections, no "rebuilt grid" across the rebuilt highway, further limiting walkability (and increasing congestion). The continued planning of the area as being a "vehicle first" environment limits the potential for walk-score improvements.

Transit mode share is expected to increase from 8.1% to 9.8% -- a small .9% increase. The plan to add bus shelters at stops along existing routes in the Phase One project area clearly will not have a transformative effect. With transportation being, as the Workforce Alliance has found, the largest barrier to job opportunities, and high employment in neighborhoods nearby, a transformative project, one at an effective scale -- is needed to achieve transportation and environmental equity.

The TIGER application mentions the bus shuttle service offered to Yale and YNH employees. While the shuttles offer alternatives to driving for members of the Yale communities, the service is not open to use by city residents. An innovative program would ask the institutions to join a transit district and transfer the costs of the shuttle system into enhanced public transit.

The City's TIGER II application lists "Activating a Participatory Planning Process" as part of the "Livability" criteria. Consistent public requests for fewer lanes, less structured parking, additional cross streets, increased transit options, streets designed as 24 hour public places, open space, greater mixture of uses, significant air quality improvements, have been made at the many meetings on this project -- and these requests have largely gone unheeded. Requests by the public for documents often went unheeded. For instance, documents on the plans for the 100 College Street building were posted only after a City Plan Commission meeting on zoning for the project, not before. And sadly, the most effective and efficient way to create meaningful opportunities for public participation -- the charrette process -- was not used.



Fig. 22 Proposed building for 100 College Street, Winstanley Enterprises



Fig. 23 Current conditions on MLK Boulevard along the Air Rights Garage will not improve. Instead, the Winstanley Enterprises project will expand the frontage of buildings with no sidewalks or active uses about 460' more along each Frontage Road.

° **Sustainability:** Improving energy efficiency, reducing dependence on oil, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and benefiting the environment.

The project's focus on expanding SOV use, with only marginal attention to transit development -- such as adding bus shelters to existing routes -- also means that the project fails to rebalance the transportation system with sustainable and equitable transportation choices. The Benefit Cost Analysis claims (with no supporting evidence) that this project will result in a SOV mode shift from 73.7% to 65.5%. Even if this is an accurate number, it is important to note that while the percent of cars may decrease, the total number of cars increases, because the total volume of all modes of traffic is larger. Plainly, if the number of SOVs were being reduced, there would be no demand for additional lanes and new parking garages.

Glancing attention has been given to environmental issues, which has not fostered an effective solution to rebalance the transportation system to a truly multi-modal one. Full build out for the area remains car-focused. YNHH recently won zoning approval to build a new 800 car garage in the Hill neighborhood on Howard Avenue, across the street from a recently completed 843 car garage at 2 Howe Street.

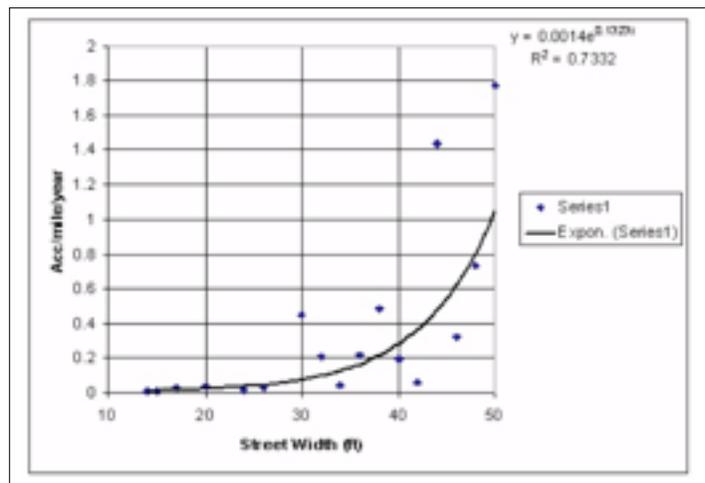
As gas prices go up, and the State of Connecticut moves toward highway tolls, alternate forms of transportation will be a more popular choice. The "build" or "no build" scenarios in the Benefit Cost Analysis are limited to leaving the area "as is" or adding garages and traffic lanes. This limited analysis does not address meaningful and sustainable alternatives, such as developing enhanced bus or streetcar routes, or developing more suburban commuter lots, which would be cheaper to build and maintain.

Safety: Improving the safety of the US Transportation System

The proposed arterials are too wide. At an average of 50' at most crosswalks, the new roads create dangerous conditions for pedestrians. Studies by Peter Swift show that above 30' widths, pedestrian casualties rise dramatically. Additionally, wide one-way arterials encourage higher speeds (Appendix A). To build crosswalks over distances that predict serious pedestrian casualty is a failure and contradicts a key criteria of the TIGER program.



Figs. 24 a & b. Above, MLK Boulevard and Church Street intersection. The roadway will expand from 3 to 5 lanes at each crosswalk. Right, Peter Swift, graph on relationship of street width to accidents.



The most fundamental tasks for achieving public safety through planning are to establish, as identified in *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design; Crime Prevention Smart Code Module*⁶ are:

- mixed-use buildings,
- territoriality (users sense of ownership),
- natural surveillance,
- activity support, and
- image.

The Downtown Crossing project is not mixed use, its focus on cars and garages weakens it as a territory for people, the activities it is built to support do not extend beyond the regular work day, natural surveillance is limited by the high percent of building frontages that have no active uses, and its image is of a place organized around the institutional uses, not for human needs for beauty and comfort. As James Howard Kunstler wrote for the Crime Prevention Smart Code Module, "The best way to bring security to streets is to make them delightful places that honorable and decent citizens will want to walk in."

The current Downtown Crossing proposal combines wide streets, one-way travel, and limited active uses -- a dangerous combination that fails to create an environment protective of personal and public safety.

Job Creation and Economic Stimulus: The Department will give priority to projects that are expected to create and preserve jobs and stimulate rapid increases in economic activity, particularly jobs and activities that benefit economically distressed areas.

A garage to serve 800 out of a projected 1,000 jobs demonstrates in clear physical form that many of the jobs will be for people who commute, not for people who live in economically distressed neighborhoods nearby. The use of land for above ground parking places a permanent constraint on the amount of economic development and job creation the newly created development zone can support.

Innovation: Priority will be given to projects that use innovative strategies to pursue the long-term outcomes outlined above.

Achieving high quality, long-term outcomes is unlikely without a comprehensive plan for how the project will integrate with local and regional plans. Because the New Haven Downtown Crossing project has moved forward prior to the development of a comprehensive plan, it has serious deficiencies. Downtown Crossing's physical plan is essentially a rebuilt and widened highway, not a removed one. The transformation of the process from its initial community-wide focus to a developer-driven process has marginalized core public benefits: streets as places not conduits, cleaner air, public safety, a reconnected city, a human sized and inviting streetscape, and jobs for people who live here. The central goal of the current project now seems to be to engineer a service drive to accommodate a

⁶ Randy Atlas, PhD, AIA, CPP, *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design; Crime Prevention Smart Code Module*, 2011, www.transect.org/modules.html

new private parking garage, and an existing and already accessible public garage. It is also of concern that the Carter Winstanley project and garage is scheduled to open in 2013, three years before the completion of the road and tunnel projects serving it, projected for 2016.

Considering the City's economic needs and the damages done by the immense, yet never quite adequate, quantity of off-street parking, innovation needs to focus on reductions in parking demand, and creation of a transportation system that would allow the city to in fact reduce the amount of parking in the future. Creating a transit district in the zone would be innovative, and possible. The Route 34 lands are still public. There are multiple public and private transit services that could be merged, and a underground parking facility in the current highway bed, which the City could maintain ownership of, could be used to help fund the transit system.

The race to capture Federal funds might have had the unintentional but confounding effect of not integrating the various funded projects. The Downtown Crossing plan has not been integrated with other major Federal investments in the area -- the TOD project for Union Station, the Church Street South project to rebuild a former public housing complex as a mixed-use, mixed-income development, and the New Haven Streetcar Study. The current plan for rebuilding Church Street South does not even establish a simple, intuitive, walkable link from the Train Station to Downtown and the Yale Medical Area. Removing the barriers that have disconnected vital parts of the City requires integration, not isolation, of the different projects supported by these Federal funds.

The Downtown Crossing project is also weakened because there is no plan of development for the Hill Neighborhood, the neighborhood most negatively affected by the construction of the Route 34 highway spur. Such a plan would offer guidance on how the Downtown Crossing project could best integrate and support revitalization of the Hill Neighborhood. Similarly, no public plan is available for the Yale Medical Area, an area that has a great amount of under-utilized land. The successful integration of the development of this land with its surrounding neighborhoods requires serious thought and study.

- Partnership: The Department will give priority to projects that demonstrate strong collaboration among a broad range of participants and/or integration of transportation with other public service efforts.

The Public Private Partnership with city and state agencies, institutions and the developer did not accommodate full participation of residents and constituency groups at the beginning and subsequent phases of the planning process. Had the plan been vetted with the public prior to application, the hardened silos of interests might not have been formed. If the City had encouraged its design team to engage in a true dialog with the public, rather than having presentations, followed by Q & As, followed by more, and on to the next meeting -- we would have had a more productive and meaningful process and a better and more comprehensive plan.

SECTION IV: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Crossing/Route 34 is a project that started with a vision. It was a vision of restoring the human, urban, and economic vitality of a large section of New Haven by removing a highway spur, a spur whose original construction created a dead zone around its perimeter, and cut off the urban grid connections between the medical/hospital area, the train station, downtown New Haven, and the adjacent Hill neighborhood. The project was named Downtown Crossing because the underlying vision was to reconnect the streets, and by doing so, to reconnect the City, letting the benefits of urban living and urban development flow freely through the reinvigorated streetscape.

The Downtown Crossing project as it now stands does not remove the sunken highway spur. It rebuilds it and widens it. Though it is only Phase One of a multiphase project, it so mimics the flaws of the original highway spur that without improvement it is likely to remain as much an obstacle to reconnecting the City as the existing highway to nowhere. The questions that must be answered now are: how did the project move so far from the original vision; and, perhaps more important, how can the present project be reconfigured into the framework of the original vision, especially given the Fall 2012 deadlines built into the TIGER II funding. Fortunately the answer to the second question may be contained in the answer to the first.



Figs. 25 a, b, c. Scenes from the Community Workshop on Downtown Crossing, July 2011, organized by the New Haven Urban Design League in partnership with many community groups.

When the Carter Winstanley development became the centerpiece of the TIGER II grant application the City's focus shifted from one of just reconnecting Downtown Crossing, to a focus of reconnecting Downtown Crossing in conjunction with capturing the projected revenue, public and private, from the Winstanley biotech development. That in and of itself was not a bad thing. But as has been discussed in previous sections, despite the fact that there were many public meetings, there was not a robust public process that would have maintained a healthy balance between private and public needs. Winstanley's concerns were addressed. Public concerns were allowed to be aired in meetings, but (with the exception of some tinkering around the edges) they were not addressed, and are not reflected in either the final plans, or in a process that would have kept the Winstanley development embedded in the larger vision.

The bright side of understanding that the problem was the lack of a robust public process, is that it also suggests the solution, and a timely process to achieve it. The solution is instituting a meaningful public process. There is a known, accelerated, compressed, and inclusive way to do this: the community planning and design charrette.

The charrette is a process used in planning major municipal developments that brings together in one place, under the management of an independent, professional charrette organizer, all the government, public and private parties involved in, and affected by, a given development, for an intense, interactive, weeklong planning and development

session. For Downtown Crossing it would draw upon the participation, work, concerns and expertise of the City; the developer; community groups in the affected neighborhoods; business, environmental, health, design, and transportation interest groups; and architects, urban planners, transportation engineers and hospital planning experts. The end product of this process would be a comprehensive plan of development for this area that would address the needs and concerns of all parties.

An independent, highly regarded non-profit institute with the necessary expertise in running charrettes, is The National Charrette Institute: http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/NCI_RWJF_Forum.html. In partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the National Charrette Institute has developed a specific process that uses the charrette process to create healthy communities. The "healthy communities" approach is tailor made for the Downtown Crossing project, which is located in a place that is both a major medical center and an environmental justice community. The advantage of using a professional, independent, charrette organization is that it is experienced in focusing the planning and development process on both the exigencies cities and developers face, and the needs of the communities. Professional charrette organizers know how to calm a municipality's fears that a truly open public process will lead to unending and unhelpful public demands, while at the same time fully listening to and addressing the public's concerns, culling out the best of their ideas. In addition they are capable of producing, in the course of a short, condensed period, a usable blueprint for the development of Downtown Crossing and it's environs, a plan that would actually remove the highway, reconnect the streets, and position the Carter Winstanley biotech development within the context of a larger plan of development.

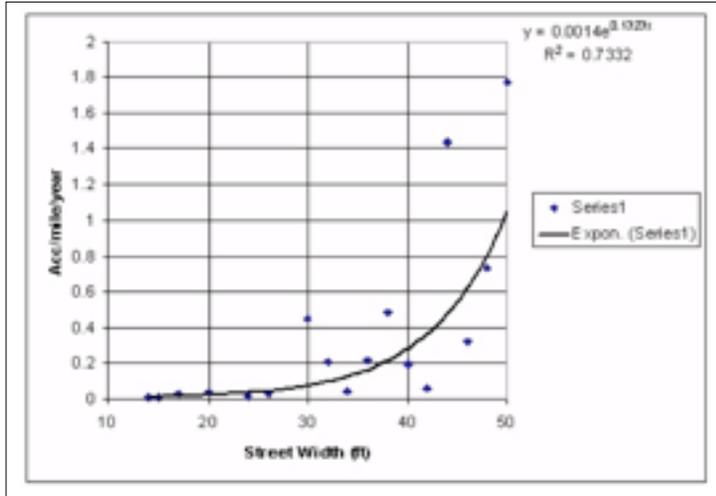
An example of how much could be achieved in a very short time span is the two day mini-charrette the New Haven Urban Design League organized last August--Envisioning Downtown Crossing: A Community Workshop. It was pulled together in three weeks, with very little money and the donated professional services of architects, urban planners, and traffic engineers from near and far, and donated workspace and accommodations. It was attended by community groups from the affected neighborhoods and the City at large, staff from the City's Department of Economic Development and the Department of City Plan, and staff from Representative Rosa De Lauro's office. The design team interacted with the community groups and staffers during an open-table process, and produced various ideas for approaches to Downtown Crossing, the train station, the medical and hospital area, downtown and the Hill. (Unedited slides from the mini-charrette can be found at the League's temporary website and in contemporaneous press reports linked to at the website: www.urbandesignleague.org.)

The League estimated that the total cost of the two day workshop was \$45,000, almost all of it in donated professional time, workspace and accommodations. A full scale charrette run by the National Charrette Organization might cost two to three times as much, but even that would be a tiny fraction of the costs of the Downtown Crossing project, and it should pay for itself many times over in the comprehensive planning that comes out of it. It is likely that a professional charrette organizer can move as quickly on this as the League did--they would have the necessary resources and experience to proceed apace.

None of what is proposed here is easy, and all of it is work intensive, but there clearly is a path forward. What is needed is the courage to pursue that path. Returning the Downtown Crossing project from being a developer-driven project to a vision-driven development -- a project that positions the Carter Winstanley biotech building within the context of a revitalized, reconnected swath of New Haven -- depends upon that courage.

Appendix A: Data from Studies by Peter Swift on the Correlation between Road Width and Casualties

Residential Street Typology and Injury Accident Frequency



A chart showing the correlation between lane widths and fatalities, showing a steep increase in fatalities on streets above 30' in width. On the left, a chart showing that road capacity decreases at speeds above 25-30 mph. Additionally, road capacity actually decreases at speeds above 25-30 MPH, further narrowing defense for high speed lanes in pedestrian areas. A 35 mph speed limit is being planned for Downtown Crossing. The five-lane widths will encourage this and faster speeds, creating both danger and less efficiency.

The 2008 chart by Peter Swift, P.E. demonstrates that injury accidents increase exponentially with street width. From plumbings thousands of police reports and hospital records, Peter Swift assembled the following types and costs of accidents that occur at different speeds, which of course can be tied to lane width:

Abbreviated Injury Scale (AIS) -- AIS Code

Injury Severity Level and Selected Injuries

1 (14 mph) Minor Superficial abrasion or laceration of skin; digit sprain; first-degree burn; head trauma with headache or dizziness (no other neurological signs).

2 (20 mph) Moderate Major abrasion or laceration of skin; cerebral concussion (unconscious less than 15 minutes); finger or toe crush/amputation; closed pelvic fracture with or without dislocation.

3 (25 mph) Serious Major nerve laceration; multiple rib fracture (but without flail chest); abdominal organ contusion; hand, foot, or arm crush/amputation.

4 (29 mph) Severe Spleen rupture; leg crush; chest-wall perforation; cerebral concussion with other neurological signs (unconscious less than 24 hours).

5 (33 mph) Critical Spinal cord injury (with cord transection); extensive second-or third-degree burns; cerebral concussion with severe neurological signs (unconscious more than 24 hours).

6 (36 mph) Fatal Injuries which although not fatal within the first 30 days after an accident, ultimately result in death.

Appendix B : TIGER II Criteria on Livability

The New Haven Register -- Opinion
DUO DICKINSON: A blah building is wrong for Route 34

Sunday, July 31, 2011

WE'RE all experiencing the birth of a major gateway experience — the new Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge. It's becoming clear that it will be an extraordinarily dynamic focal point of both arrival and passage. The arcing glass lobby of the new Gateway Community College also promises to be a proud "Hello!" to those coming into downtown New Haven.

"Gateways" are often intentional — the Statue of Liberty, the St. Louis Arch, the Golden Gate Bridge — all are iconic and capture the sensibility of their host cities and convey to strangers that something special surrounds them.

New Haven has succeeded in getting a great deal of funding for something called the Downtown Crossing: Route 34 East.

The \$31.7 million project has as its linchpin a development team from Parsons Brinckerhoff in Glastonbury. The site was previously ripped apart by the grand 1960s creation of the launching pad for a failed Robert Moses-like multilane highway zooming into the Naugatuck Valley. The lone building directly accommodating this effort is the Air Rights Garage whose huge post-tensioned concrete span was intended to accommodate the nonexistent highway.

Small cities like New Haven desperately need private development to leverage infrastructure reform. The intention of the New Haven Coliseum to be a positive gateway experience never seemed to rock anyone's world except for fans of hockey, circuses, rockers and architects.

Just like the Air Rights Garage, the Coliseum came to be an embarrassing reminder of what didn't happen. Conversely, the Ninth Square development pooled public and private resources and has effectively transformed a depopulated and decaying part of New Haven into a place that, while not fully occupied, is stable and increasingly invigorated.

In the Parsons Brinckerhoff proposal for the Route 34 Connector, the initial and central private investment is a 400,000-square-foot, medical research and office building proposed by Winstanley Enterprises.

Set in front of the Air Rights Garage, this building will be one that should intentionally and proudly draw attention and focus to this new way into town. No matter what its design, it will be a gateway simply by its location. Given what has been presented to the public, its impossible to know just how this building addresses its crucial position.

Too often developers condition their investment in a community on changes in infrastructure involving cars, streets and streetscapes, but offer up only placeholder architecture in their proposals — promissory fantasies of how buildings might look in order to sell the project. The truth is that while most of us may appreciate reconnecting streets in New Haven, what most people will see are the buildings that result from those infrastructure changes.

In trying to sort out who is actually going to be designing the proposed building at 100 College St., it seems that it is John Martin from the Elkus Manfredi architectural firm in Boston who has offered up a rendering to lube the skids of public acceptance. As presented, this vision study doesn't show the potential for the architecture to make a gateway statement of arrival and promise. It is a blank, slightly bent, glass faced hulk.

Unlike some proposals that lead with the architecture, such as the Yale University School of Management building designed by Lord Norman Foster, this proposal leads with a street grid and simply provides anonymous buildings as

Appendix B continued, Dickinson Op-Ed

a consequence of recaptured land. Unlike the SOM building, the final occupancy has yet to be determined, but the quality of what is offered up is almost absurdly generic and scaleless.

Architectural recognition of a focal site and its context should be a key component of this development proposal. The various proposals that resulted in the selection of the 360 State building offered up differing visions of the site's character and potential.

Unfortunately, this large-scale development project for Route 34 is spending millions upon millions of public dollars yet offers up a building that could be in Dallas, Miami or Los Angeles.

The project's seminal building, as proposed by the Manfredi firm, should be one that reflects the transition from the miscalculations of a multi-lane highway to the pride and potential of one of the world's leading research centers: Yale University and New Haven.

Regrettably, what has been represented so far seems a fairly pale place holder in one of the few places where a signature building could make sense. Let's hope there is room in the budget for a building design that reflects thoughtful integration into a small New England city, and offers a vision that burnishes its unique character.

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Appendix C: Links to News and Opinion on Downtown Crossing

A Genuine Real Live Neighbor Shows Up

New Haven Independent, March 8, 2012

http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/downtown_crossing_where_ar/

Hijacked Road Realignment: Fast Track To Embarrassment

By JOHN NORQUIST, President, The Congress for the New Urbanism

The Hartford Courant, December 22, 2011

http://www.courant.com/news/opinion/hc-op-norquist-new-haven-connector1222-20111222_0,2621289.story

New Haven Road plan tarnishes the TIGER program

Better! Cities& Towns

Blog post by Philip Langdon on 22 Dec 2011

<http://bettercities.net/news-opinion/blogs/philip-langdon/15729/new-haven-road-plan-tarnishes-tiger-program>

Downtown Crossing Critics: City Meant Well, Did Badly

New Haven Independent, October 10, 2011

http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/rte_341/

How About A Roundabout? Or More Trees?

New Haven Independent, August 1, 2011

http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/rte_34/

Bravo! Bike Lane Enters Stage Right

New Haven Independent, June 10, 2011

http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/downtown_crossing_design_goe/

Route 34 connector: Don't repeat sins of the past

New Haven Register, September 19, 2010

By Duo Dickinson

<http://www.nhregister.com/articles/2010/09/19/opinion/doc4c957eb61d931445026521.txt>



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