

# CONCORD MONITOR

Published on *Concord Monitor* (<http://www.concordmonitor.com>)

[Home](#) > Residents ask about revamped Main St.

## Residents ask about revamped Main St.

By *Maddie Hanna*

Created 07/01/2010 - 00:00

Concord

Business owners, city councilors and curious residents descended upon the downtown Holiday Inn last night to debate the fate of Main Street, crowding before posters showing a three-lane roadway and peppering consultants with questions.

Wouldn't parallel parking slow the flow of traffic? How would emergency vehicles navigate a narrower roadway? And what, exactly, would be the point in planting more trees?

The consultants - a team led by Manchester firm Hoyle, Tanner & Associates - paused from their presentation last night to answer those questions, citing computer-generated traffic models they said showed parallel parking to be a viable option and explaining how emergency vehicles could more easily maneuver on a three-lane street, thanks to the center turning lane.

As for the trees, the answer was simpler: People like them, the consultants said.

But those were just a few of the questions that came up during last night's presentation, which was meant to serve as an introduction to the possibilities the consultants envision for Main Street.

On display last night were scenarios showing Main Street as two, three or four lanes, with different combinations of angled and parallel parking, varying sidewalk widths and in one case a raised, landscaped median.

Those are only possibilities, the consultants repeated. But while they emphasized that nothing had been decided, they pointed out that without reducing the roadway, options for improving the sidewalks were limited.

"It's a new thinking that has to happen," said one of the consultants, Harry Fuller, after one woman asked whether the project was intended to benefit business owners or residents - Fuller's answer: both - and another questioned why the city wanted wider sidewalks when, in her opinion, it doesn't adequately maintain what it has.

"I'm postulating that to do any of this," Fuller said, will require some "recalibrating" on the part of the public.

Citizens group Concord 2020 is footing the bill for the team of consultants, which it selected along with nonprofit Main Street Concord.

Jennifer Kretovic of 2020 and Jessica Eshleman of Main Street Concord say their goal is to make Main Street more pedestrian-friendly, bringing more people downtown and boosting the city's economy.

The consultants - who will be at Market Days to talk about the project - plan to present a final proposal to the public in October, with a recommendation ready for the city council in November. From there, the council will decide whether to pursue the project, which Kretovic said last night would cost about \$7.18 million.

That's less than the \$8.25 million she and Eshleman cited when they began pitching the project earlier this year. The difference is that the less expensive project wouldn't stretch as far south as the McDonald's on South Main Street or include putting power lines underground along South Main Street.

And the city would only pursue the project with the help of a federal grant. Kretovic said grants may be available that cover at least 80 percent of the cost.

Even if the council moves forward with the project and gets a grant, the design likely wouldn't be finalized until fiscal year 2014, with the first phase of work not beginning until fiscal year 2016 - and then two more years of work, scheduled for alternating years after that.

That may seem far off, but for a project like this, much planning is required, the consultants said.

And planning, from an economic perspective, is what the city needs, Russ Thibeault said.

Thibeault, a Laconia economist and member of the consulting team, said while Concord's downtown has fared well so far - "one of the healthiest downtowns in New Hampshire" - demographics show growth is slowing.

Given that trend and "competition nibbling at your heels," he said, "some changes have to be made."

[Politics](#)   [Civil services](#)   [CONCORD \(NH\)](#)   [Front page](#)   [Local authorities](#)   [Publishable](#)  
[Resellable](#)   [News Articles](#)   [Maddie Hanna](#)   [Monitor staff](#)

**Source URL:** <http://www.concordmonitor.com/article/residents-ask-about-revamped-main-st>