

Streetscape Proposal

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To: Oak Bluffs Planning Board <planningboard@oakbluffsma.gov>

To the Members of the Oak Bluffs Planning Board

I'd like to preface this letter with the fact that I do not like to parallel park my car. That being said I also do not enjoy pushing my kids stroller into the street because there happens to be another person with a stroller or wheelchair coming in the opposite direction.

Those are my personal comments but the following are my business driven comments:

There once was a time when parallel parking existed in Oak Bluffs and you could drive through Healey Square. Then times changed, and with more cars coming to town we were pressed to adapt and make the necessary changes. I feel like we are again at a similar crossroads. With our 20+ thousand daily visitors, Social Distancing requirements, a busy harbor and boating community and the recent uptick in home purchases and rentals, we are now in desperate need to provide a safer, more attractive and accessible sidewalk infrastructure. Additionally, we are living in a time where consumers have the ability to purchase their groceries, clothing, hardware, stationary supplies and just about anything else they want on the Internet, and doing so is becoming easier, faster and less expensive everyday. For the businesses who choose to paint, clean and maintain their store fronts, put up holiday decorations and religiously update and invent creative window displays, my assumption would be that those business are looking to attract customers and provide a more pleasurable experience for their consumer. Those stores likely do not rely on being the only show in town to succeed, but know that they must work, adapt and change to thrive. As main streets in America become a thing of the past, the one common denominator that all of the successful remaining downtowns share is a superior pedestrian experience and this should not go unnoticed. The melting pot of stores on Circuit Ave all have a varying percentage of their customer who actually park on the street to come shop, some much less than others, but I can guarantee that 100 percent of all of their guests are required to walk on the sidewalk to get where they are going. The parking spaces are owned by the town and the taxpayers and not any individual store and the spots must be maximized for the greater good of all people and the sidewalks should be no different. So, I am obviously in favor of expanding the sidewalks in our local downtown, even if it means sacrificing a couple of spots to parallel parking in order to accommodate a safer and more open walking experience for everyone. In my opinion the charm of Oak Bluffs lies in its picturesque walks through the Campgrounds, Ocean Park and along the harbor, not in its number of parking spaces.

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