

To: Peter Ratkiewich – Westport Town Engineer

From: Chris McLean, P.E.
John D. Plante, P.E.

Date: 31 May 2023
Revised 16 August 2023

Re: Proposed Traffic Memorandum
Downtown Westport Improvements
Westport, Connecticut
Langan Project No.: 140251201

Langan has performed an evaluation of traffic operations in downtown in conjunction with the planned renovation of the Parker Harding Plaza parking lot in Westport, Connecticut (See **Figure 1**). The proposed changes to the existing parking lot associated with the Reconnecting the Riverfront: Parker Harding Plaza project will likely result in modifications to travel patterns in the downtown area. This analysis supplements the existing conditions analysis for the downtown Parker Harding Plaza by Langan, dated November 10, 2022 and revised August 2, 2023. Since the existing conditions analysis was confirmed using 2023 traffic data, this proposed conditions assessment is also confirmed.

Our evaluation indicates that the existing roadway network will operate at acceptable levels-of-service with the proposed reconstruction of Parker Harding Plaza parking lot changes. The proposed conditions were reviewed with the removal of the 'cut-through' road serving southbound vehicles from Main Street to Route 1. The results of the removal of the 'cut-through' road show that the rest of the downtown roadway network can support the changes to traffic patterns associated with the Parker Harding Plaza improvements. However if the 'cut-through' access is preserved, we would expect the downtown traffic operations to be similar to what exist under existing conditions.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The planned riverwalk and streetscape project is located along the Saugatuck River at Parker Harding Plaza in Westport, Connecticut (See **Figure 1** of **Appendix A**). The majority of the riverwalk improvements are along the edge of an existing 214-space parking lot that serves the downtown area. The lot is accessed from Route 1 to the south and Main Street to the north. A portion of the existing parking lot and surrounding landscaping features will be razed as part of the construction of a new greenway along the riverfront with a new zoning-compliant parking lot.

Several design options were considered during the Reconnecting the Riverfront project planning phase. The project design team weighed the different options factoring in feedback from the general public and key stakeholders. Ultimately, the selected design option featured a balance between the riverfront green space requirements and optimal parking supply in Parker Harder Plaza parking lot. This design features a main parking aisle parallel to the storefronts with a one-way southbound 'cut-through' road between the parking area and the Saugatuck River. Traffic can recirculate within the parking lot using this 'cut-through' road. This design maintains vehicular ingress and egress from both ends of the parking lot allowing vehicles to enter from Route 1 and from Main Street and exit from either driveway after recirculating within the lot. This design also preserves the one-way southbound 'cut-through' access that serves vehicles driving from Main Street to Route 1 without driving through the parking area.

PROPOSED TRAFFIC OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

The changes to the Parker Harding Plaza parking lot were evaluated to measure the effect on traffic operations resulting from the potential re-routing of some traffic within the downtown area. Langan reviewed the proposed parking and landscaping plans to review on-site and off-site (downtown) vehicular circulation.

Langan previously assessed the existing traffic operating conditions under separate cover dated November 10, 2022 and revised August 2, 2023. The existing downtown Westport roadway network generally operated at acceptable levels-of-service. The redesigned Parker Harding Plaza is expected to slightly reduce traffic to the parking lot by reducing the quantity of parking spaces. This reduction in traffic is anticipated to be redistributed throughout the rest of the downtown area. This redistributed traffic is not expected to have a noticeable effect on the area roadway network and the parking lot driveways since the existing roadway network generally operating at acceptable levels-of-service.

The proposed site plan was also evaluated for the feasibility of removing the 'cut-through' roadway. Traffic would be expected to be redistributed throughout other roadways of downtown Westport with the removal of this access roadway, including Myrtle Avenue and Elm Street. This redistributed traffic is not expected to have a noticeable effect on the area roadway network and was evaluated with and without the removal of this 'cut-through' road. If the 'cut-through' access is maintained, similar proposed traffic operations would be expected to existing downtown traffic operations.

On-Site Vehicular Circulation

The Parker Harding Plaza project improves the riverfront area by providing greater non-vehicle accessibility, enhanced greenspace and a zoning compliant Parker Harding Plaza parking lot. The design of the riverwalk results in the loss approximately 42 spaces in the existing parking lot. The

majority of this loss of spaces are closest to the river where the new riverwalk is located. The remainder of the parking lot has been redesigned to result in 172 zoning complaint parking spaces. It's important to note that based on our conversations with town staff, if the existing pavement in Parker Harding Plaza was restriped to be zoning compliant, it would result in a slightly higher loss of parking spaces than with the proposed redesign. The maximum number of parking spaces in a restriped lot is 157 if existing curb lines are maintained. Therefore with the proposed reconfiguration of the parking area and installation of a riverfront park, a larger number of parking spaces would be available than if the existing configuration was restriped.

As it currently exists, Parker Harding Plaza has a one-way roadway parallel to the riverfront. This connection allows traffic to 'cut-through' the plaza lot to get from Main Street to Route 1. Based on collected traffic information in the existing conditions analysis, approximately 100 vehicles use this road to travel from Main Street to Route 1 and are not using the parking area. One version of the proposed plan eliminated this 'cut-through' roadway and replaces it with the riverfront park. Access would still be allowed from Main Street to Route 1 through the parking lot slowing drivers within the parking area and improving safety for all users.

The current proposed plan for the plaza redesign maintains this 'cut-through' roadway and removes a portion of the proposed green-space. If this 'cut-through' roadway is desired, the proposed design should implement traffic calming measures, such as a narrow pavement width, etc., to ensure vehicles travel at appropriate speeds for the dense downtown area. Based on 2023 speed data collected in the existing conditions analysis, 85th percentile speeds are 28 MPH on this section of roadway. Vehicle speeds are desired to be slower in this area of downtown Westport to encourage pedestrians and other modes of transportation to feel safe walking in the new riverfront green space.

Off-Site Downtown Vehicular Circulation

The proposed renovations to the Parker Harding Plaza parking lot are expected to redirect some traffic on the downtown roadways. The existing two-way vehicular circulation within the parking lot is maintained and the two access points, Main Street and Route 1, are also maintained. Based on existing traffic count data, most patrons entering the Parker Harding Plaza parking lot are arriving from Route 1 via the Saugatuck River bridge to the west.

Drivers entering the Parker Harding Plaza parking lot who are not able to find parking within the lot have parking options elsewhere downtown. **Figure 1** shows the available parking lots in downtown Westport. There are various locations for parking available in downtown Westport in other locations such as the Baldwin lot, Jesup Green lot, Imperial lot, and the library lot. The town is exploring ways to enhance parking accessibility in downtown Westport, including wayfinding signage and other parking amenities.

Langan reviewed the existing and proposed off-site circulation patterns based on the selected design, available traffic count data and downtown road directions. **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** show directional arrows to illustrate the anticipated traffic routes patrons using the Parker Harding Plaza lot use in the proposed conditions.

CONCLUSION

This assessment investigates the proposed traffic operations traffic of downtown Westport associated with the reconstruction of the Parker Harding Plaza parking lot with the selected design. The project team considered different parking and green space layout options to meet general public and key stakeholder requirements. The existing 214-space parking lot is proposed to be redesigned to provide a 172-space parking lot with a riverwalk and green space. Based on a review of the proposed redesign of the Parker Harder Plaza parking lot, the following on- and off-site traffic improvements should be noted:

- The proposed parking lot design balances the parking and riverwalk green space while maintaining the same access points and two-way circulation that currently exist through Parker Harding Plaza.
- The 'cut-through' is proposed to be maintained to match existing downtown traffic patterns. It was evaluated in two scenarios: (1) with it removed and (2) maintained. Other areas of downtown Westport can handle the redistributed traffic in either scenario.
- The circulation patterns through Parker Harding Plaza are maintained, where traffic can enter/exit from Route 1 to the south and Main Street to the north. This maintains existing circulation patterns within downtown Westport and within Parker Harding Plaza parking lot.
- The current parking is not zoning compliant from a dimensional standpoint. Per conversations with the town staff, if the existing pavement was restriped to meet current zoning code, there would be slightly greater loss in parking spaces than with the proposed redesign.
- Other parking options existing throughout downtown Westport and the town is exploring options to enhance parking accessibility.

Our evaluation indicates that, with the proposed reconstruction of Parker Harding Plaza, the existing roadway network operates at acceptable levels-of-service within the project vicinity.

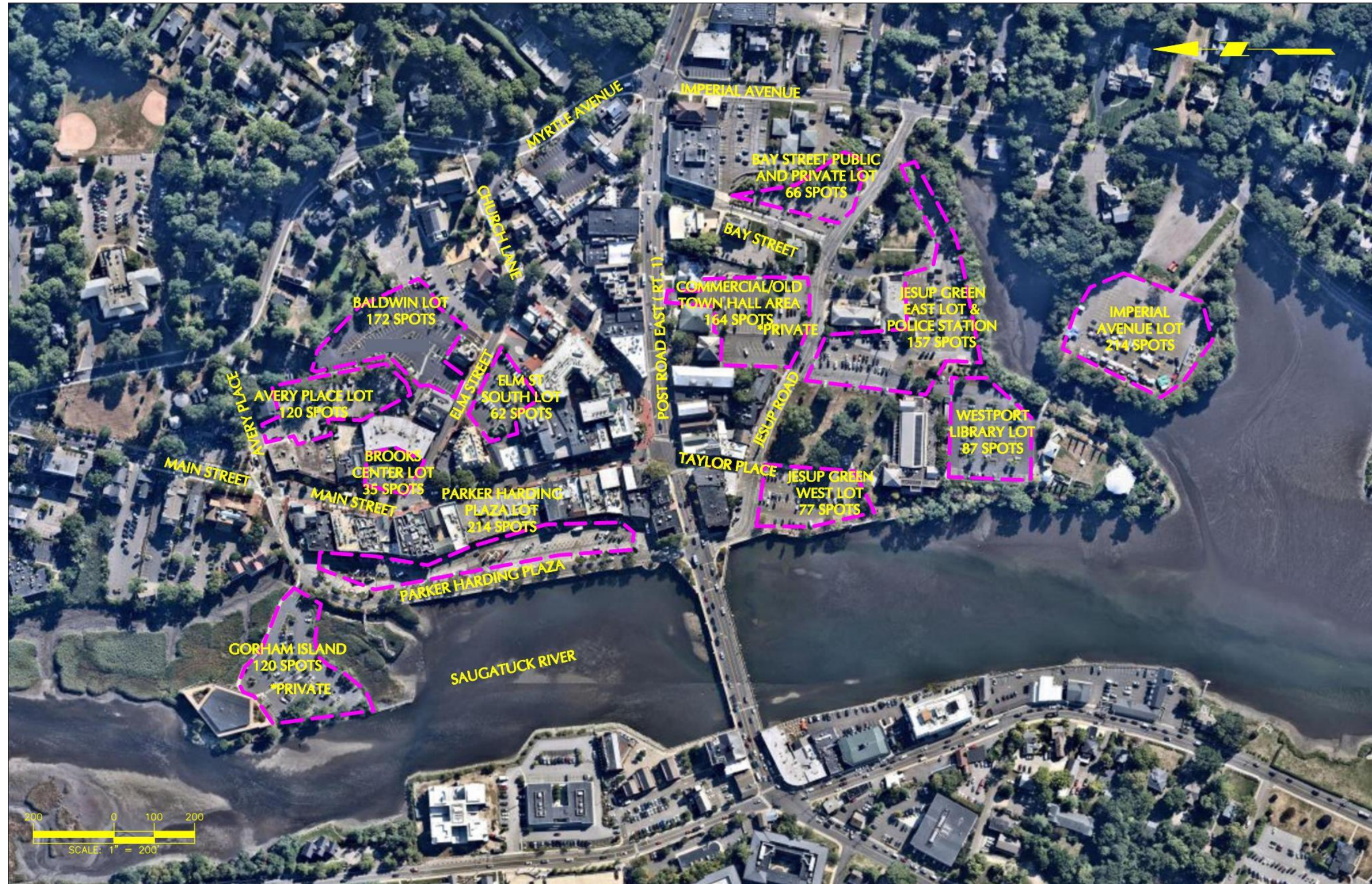


Figure 1 – Existing Parking Lots

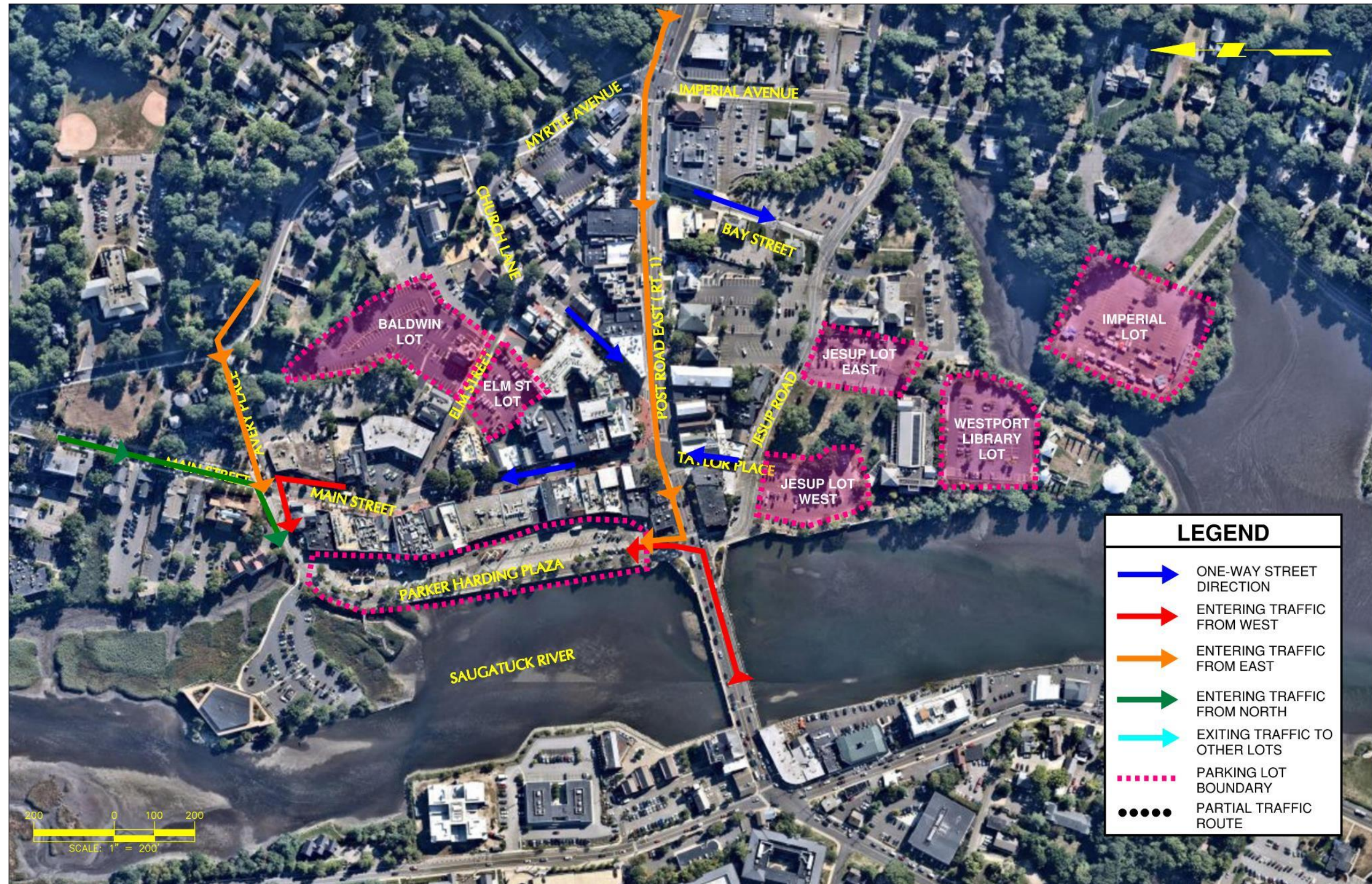


Figure 2 – Parker Harding Plaza Reconfiguration Entering Traffic Patterns

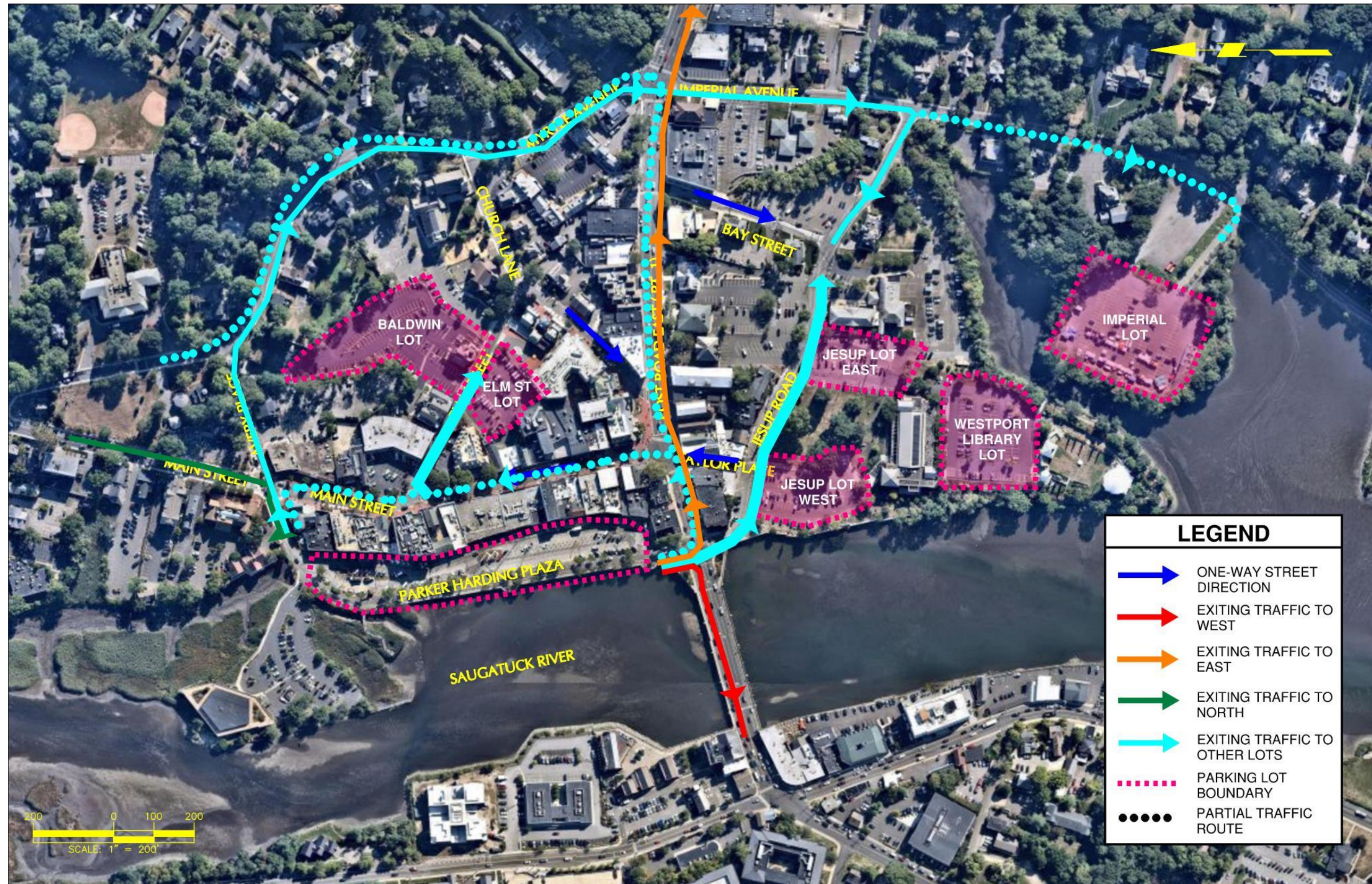


Figure 3 – Parker Harding Plaza Reconfiguration Exiting Traffic Patterns