

Boardman Street & Walnut Street Safety Upgrades

MAH-Boardman/Walnut St; PID 116833



Summary of Public Comments and Responses May 7, 2024

In January 2024, the initial plans for the Boardman Street and Walnut Street Safety Upgrades project were mailed to property owners and tenants in the project area, sent out in a news release, and posted to the City of Youngstown's website in order for the public to review and comment. In February 2024, after many constructive and viable comments were received from the public, the City of Youngstown revised the plans and reissued them in a news release and posted the updated plans on the City's website. The updated plans included the stairway connection between Commerce Street and Wood Street. The attached final plans have been revised again to include further comments from the public. All comments received since January 2024 are summarized below.

1. Will there be additional parking provided along Boardman Street and Walnut Street to offset the loss of parking from other construction in the city?

Yes, The City is proposing an increased amount of parking on Walnut Street in the form of parallel parking and back-in diagonal parking to offset the loss of parking in other locations downtown. This project does **not** include permanent closure of any streets (i.e. North Phelps Street).

2. Why use back-in diagonal parking for this project when it is not consistent with the rest of the city streets, is more expensive, and only adds minimal additional parking?

Back-in diagonal parking adds more spots than parallel parking. The City of Youngstown plans to utilize this type of parking as it has many benefits including improved visibility for drivers to see approaching vehicles/bicyclists while pulling out, easier to load and unload both passengers and cargo as the car doors open toward the sidewalk rather than toward the street, and there are reduced collisions compared to backing out. While there is some additional cost to back-in diagonal parking, the additional cost is minimal during overall project construction.

3. Can cars only back into the diagonal parking spaces along the west side of Walnut Street heading north?

Yes, these spots will be signed "back in only" with no "head in" parking. There are 3 steps to back-in diagonal parking: Turn on turn-signal indicating right, stop, reverse in. This will result in the driver being able to pull right out straight onto the street when leaving a spot.

4. Why is the City removing the landscaped islands in order to add parking? Please work with Cityscape to relocate the existing trees along Walnut Street.

Since the initial plans were released to the public for comment in January 2024 the plans have been changed based on public responses. The landscaped islands will now remain in the median along Walnut Street. The City is grateful for the trees planted in 2018 thanks to joint grant funding from the Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley and The Raymond John Wean Foundation, in partnership with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, as part of a community planting event/training and will keep these trees in place. Additionally, more landscaping will be added along the western and eastern sidewalks for more greenspace. Please see attached plans for the updates.

- 5. At one time the plans for Walnut Street included converting the north portion of the street into a stairway similar to the stairs at Phelps Street between Commerce Street and Wood Street. Comments supported improved pedestrian access via a stairway to make use of this unused street.**

The plans now include a pedestrian stairway on the unused portion of Walnut Street between Commerce Street and Wood Street. The existing street has been closed to traffic for many years. The sidewalk on one side will be removed to accommodate the new concrete stairway, grading, safety lighting, drainage, and landscaping. The sidewalks at the Wood Street intersection will extend through the top of stairway to deter vehicular traffic and new ADA-compliant curb ramps will be provided on either side.
- 6. Currently, many streets in Youngstown have potholes and uneven surfaces due to years of patching. Some comments suggested using Public Works funds for repair of the existing streets is a wiser investment than pursuing this project and the stairs on North Walnut Street.**

Repair and maintenance of existing streets is important to the City. However, funds for this project are currently available. This project is being funded partly by money that has been allocated by the federal government. The City will also seek additional state funding to help offset other costs that would come out of the City's budget.
- 7. Instead of just stairs on North Walnut Street, the City should implement a "STRAMP" (Stairs+Ramp) in order to keep the design ADA-compliant and to beautify the city's landscape. Other elements could include in-ground solar heating elements to reduce the need for maintenance and the addition of color-changing solar-powered lights to brighten up the steps and set for different themed occasions or events.**

The City appreciates these ideas and will take them into consideration. Detailed plans for the stairs are being developed at this time. The stairs and sidewalks will be safe for all users and ADA-compliant if feasible within the existing street right-of-way. This connection will beautify and revitalize the budding east end of Federal Street as well as create more pedestrian-friendly space. There will be opportunities for beautification measures along this connection.
- 8. The City should add more greenspace along Walnut Street, creating large enough islands to support substantial canopy trees as the street is very wide and would benefit from larger trees.**

The plans now include more greenspace along both sides of Walnut Street as a result of the public comments received. Please see attached plans for the updates.
- 9. The City has addressed the main streets that travel north/south but still needs to address the side streets that run east/west.**

In order for the downtown transportation network to work to full capacity, the streets that are the most used (high traffic counts, provide connectivity routes, access operating establishments, etc.) have been prioritized for safety improvements, and better connection of the people and places relying on those streets.
- 10. Why is the City adding parking when it already offers multiple large surface parking lots and a multi-deck parking garage?**

This project meets the goal of streets with less lanes of traffic that still provide good movement, improved pedestrian safety, accommodates on-street parking needs, and greatly increases green infrastructure. Additionally, closer parking is felt to be safer for users of downtown establishments. The City's plan for the "road diet" was due to the low traffic numbers and the streets not needing as many lanes of traffic. The "road diet" was an opportunity for more convenient parking, more greenspace, and a more aesthetic brick sidewalk.

11. Will “drop-off zone” signage with standard parking markings, coupled with regulatory signs to restrict loading/drop-off to specific times all be implemented with this project?

In order to maintain maximum safety in this area, appropriate signage and pavement marking will be used. The signs and markings that appear on the streets will be dependent on the function of that specific portion of the street. Please see attached plans for the updates.

12. The proposed design will limit Walnut Street’s functionality for vehicular traffic coming in and out of downtown businesses and establishments. Customers and employees of City Centre One, the Commerce Building, and the Post Office will experience blockages.

The plans have been updated near City Centre One, the Commerce Building, and the Post Office in order to maintain accessibility to these properties. There are now breaks in the medians to allow drives a better connection to the other side of the street rather than having to travel around a diagonal parking that was initially proposed for the Walnut Steet median. There may still be slight changes to travel patterns, but with time they will become familiar and more manageable for vehicular traffic, and safer for pedestrians/bicyclists.

13. Will there be any traffic interruption for YMCA staff, overflowing parking along the east side of the YMCA building, or users of the one-way alley on the south side of the building? Will access to the YMCA lots be maintained during construction?

Access to the YMCA lots will be maintained at all times during project construction. Travel routes will need to change, but any additional travel time will be minimal (less than 1 minute). For example, Wick Avenue travelers will have to turn right and head west on Federal Street. Watt Street travelers will have to turn right onto Walnut Street, left onto Federal Street, and left onto Commerce Street. There will be a short time during construction on the west side of Walnut Street between East Federal Street and Commerce Street where the exit to Walnut Street may be partially blocked. If a temporary total intersection closure is required, the alley will be opened to two-way traffic temporarily.