People Friendly Stamford strategy meeting
Tuesday October 26, 2021, 5 p.m.
Zoom meeting

Attendees
Bob Lion, Chris Dawson, Dice Oh, Elizabeth Middleton, Emily Gordon, Eric Morson, Jerry Silber, Luke Buttenwieser, Marion Glickson, Mary Cygan, Mike Moore, Phil Berns, Robin Stein, Will Wright

Agenda:
(link)

City DOT Projects
An update on some city DOT projects, such as turning outdoor dining areas into permanent sidewalks, and improvements to intersections to improve walkability and pedestrian safety. We noted the importance of reaching out to our membership to get letters of support for specific local projects if we need to apply for funding or grants. This will help the community understand what concrete improvements they can expect to see in their neighborhoods.

Board of Reps Advocacy Program
Jerry discussed the Board of Reps advocacy program, where we are trying to build relationships with our local reps. Some of our members have been talking to rep members who have been hostile to our priorities in the past - we want to develop a relationship with them, invite them to our happy hours, etc. to build bridges.

West Main St Bridge
Robin gave an update on West Main St Bridge - the current plan is to build a bike/ped-only bridge a bit north of the current bridge. Hopefully it will be built by next year.

Please email Robin Stein at RStein@stamfordct.gov if you're interested in his idea of starting a farmer's market near the West Main Street Bridge.

Housing Affordability Study
The City of Stamford is currently conducting a housing affordability study to explore ways to deal with the local (and regional) crisis of housing unaffordability. Dice is on the citizen advisory committee and recently wrote an op-ed about this topic. Please reach out to him at dice@peoplestamford.org with any questions.

Partnering with other orgs
Will and Dice discussed partnering with like-minded organizations across the state - so far we have had conversations with the Safe Streets Coalition of New Haven, the leaders of bike/walk commissions in Norwalk and Fairfield, and we recently spoke to a local reporter who is interested in doing a video report about organizations like us and the fight for safe streets. Please email info@peoplestamford.org if you'd like to be interviewed for any videos.

Stamford train station redesign
Will is on a citizen advisory commission for the Stamford train station redesign, and we are trying to promote the need for better bike/ped infrastructure near the station and more transit-oriented dense mixed-use development, instead of the status quo of the station being a giant parking garage with some offices next to it. Unfortunately, recently Governor Lamont and the Connecticut Department of Transportation just broke ground

on a new 900-car garage - the state DOT is very much committed to reinforcing car dependency and car traffic. Part of our mission needs to be reforming the culture around these broken state institutions.

Happy Hour
The monthly PFS Happy Hour will move indoors starting next month, rotating to new locations. Announcement to follow soon.

Meetings
A decision was made to host PFS Strategy Meetings on a monthly basis given the growth of new members and topics. Jerry will send a Doodle poll to determine the best day of the month works best for the group. A decision was also made to host an annual Long Term Strategic Planning Meeting once a year to explore new ideas, assess our priorities, gain consensus, and set our goals. Targeting early December for that meeting to coincide with the new incoming administration.

Desegregate Connecticut
Dice gave an update on the Desegregate Connecticut coalition of which PFS is a member. In the last legislative session the state passed an incremental zoning reform bill that legalizes ADUs (backyard cottages) statewide. In the next session the group will be looking to pass legislation to free up zoning around train stations in Connecticut, many of which have extremely restrictive zoning (multifamily housing bans) that wastes the economic and urban potential of these areas. Other proposals include reducing minimum lot sizes state-wide - excessively large lot size minimums (one acre or more per house) are one way in which localities try to exclude those of lesser means.

Op-ed
We recently published an op-ed in the Stamford Advocate featuring our Board of Reps scorecard. Our website got about 50-60 new hits from that article since it was published a couple of days ago.

Local e-scooter ban
Will discussed the need to overturn Stamford's local ordinance that bans e-scooters. While the city is focused on expanding street infrastructure, it's a chicken-and-egg problem: people won't support bike/mobility lanes if people aren't biking or using scooters. We think it makes sense to legalize e-scooters, which will create the need for the infrastructure as more people use them to get around.

New mayor
We discussed the importance of getting a meeting with the new mayor to discuss our priorities and get ahead of potential NIMBYism with respect to street infrastructure. Both candidates have expressed support for expansion of bike/ped infrastructure, although they are weaker on issues of housing/zoning reform.

PFS Award
We'd like nominations for this year's Safe Streets Award - please email any suggestions to info@peoplestamford.org

PFS Survey
Chris discussed how we should survey our members as well as the general public to understand their level of support for our mission and identify which priorities they are most interested in. It's also important to capture what neighborhood they live in so we can demonstrate that our agenda has broad appeal through the city.

Social Media
Please send any potential social media content (personal anecdotes about street safety, photos/videos of you walking/biking, comments on city planning, etc.) to dice@peoplestamford.org - we are gaining more followers on Facebook and Twitter and would like to keep pushing content out.

Downtown Placemaking Project
Mike Moore from the Downtown Special Services District talked about his “tactical urbanism” project in Kiwanis Park downtown to add some features and design elements that would make it a more welcoming public space - he is working on a design and asked us to provide feedback.