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# Plan would make changes on Ash Street

By ZACH EVERSON  
Part 2 of 3

READING - Ash Street could be transformed considerably if the Downtown Steering Committee's recommendations are endorsed by the Board of Selectmen on August 5.

If the plan is approved, Ash Street would be one-way headed toward Main Street, except for the portion between Green and Gould streets, which would be two-way. Currently Ash Street is all one-way, headed away from Main Street.

In addition, the Ash/Main Street intersection would be at a sharper angle, as the change in direction would allow cars to turn off of Ash Street on to Main Street.

"This would allow motorists from the Haven Street/Gould Street area to have access to Main Street either north or south," wrote Randy Collins, a senior landscape architect/project manager at Gates, Leighton & Associates, who is working

with the Steering Committee.

There would also be a small route to connect Ash Street directly with Haven Street in hopes of making it easing for vehicular traffic.

Finally, the parking lot in front of the Tambone building, which houses Fleet Bank, among other businesses, would be redesigned to allow for the connection of Ash and Haven Street.

The design of the new lot would keep cars in line at Fleet's drive-up window on the bank's property and not backed up on to Haven Street.

Representatives of the Steering Committee have met with the owners of the building, who gave their consent to a plan in which only one parking space would be lost in the reconfigured lot.

Before reaching their decision, several other options were considered.

The Steering Committee had

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examined the possibility of constructing a connector road between Gould and Haven streets. That road would give cars on the lower portion of Haven Street an easier way to get to Woburn Street, as they would be able to use Linden Street. It would also make it easier for people looking for parking spaces along Haven Street to circle the area.

The committee voted against that option for two main reasons. "Ultimately, this idea was eliminated because it required the utilization of private property and also due to the potential of increase in traffic on Linden Street," Collins wrote.

Changing lower Main Street from two lanes in each direction to one was another option turned down by the committee. The extra space would have been used for larger sidewalks and parking spaces, but area merchants did not respond favorably to the plan.

That was not the only idea

nixed by the Steering Committee when it did not receive the support of local merchants. The committee had considered making a more subtle transition from two lanes to one on the southbound side of Main Street. This design, however, would have eliminated five parking spaces.

Another option looked at, but not endorsed by the Steering Committee, would have turned parking spaces on the southbound side of Main Street into a travel lane during the morning rush hour.

The public hearing will be held in the Senior Center on August 5 at 7:30 pm. At that time, the Steering Committee will formally present their conclusions to the Selectmen. The center will open to the public at 7:00 pm.

The final article of this three-part series will appear next week and will look at the proposed changes to the area around the town Common.