



Office of the Town Manager
Frank Cassidy

STAFF REPORT

Warrenton Town Council

Carter Nevill, Mayor
Roy Francis, Ward 1
William Semple, Ward 2 Vice Mayor
Larry Kovalik, Ward 3
Michele O'Halloran, Ward 4
Eric Gagnon, Ward 5
Paul Mooney, At Large
David McGuire, At Large

Council Meeting Date:	April 8, 2025
Agenda Title:	Main St Discussion- Parklets, Concepts, Sidewalk Cafe
Requested Action:	Information/Discussion
Department / Agency Lead:	Town Manager
Staff Lead:	Frank Cassidy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary will be brief as most is found in the November 12, 2024 Council meeting when the issue of RollOutWarrenton! was discussed, and in the attachments; as well as the Council Work Session on March 10, 2025..

At the November Council meeting, Staff was asked to look at a way to make the “parklet” program a yearlong/permanent program. The first thing to clarify is we don’t have a “parklet” program, we have a RollOutWarrenton! Program. We started by asking us all to remember our objective, to develop and provide a consistent, equitable, and predictable program. Then, we must remember that as we develop a walk able environment, this environment must be supplemented by a “sitable” aspect while providing public spaces for public use. These are fundamental aspects of good community developments and supported by entities like Strong Towns.

We have identified a section in our Town Code, Section 14-1, Obstructions generally, Sidewalk Cafes as the opportunity to continue this program. Section 14-1 maintains the objective of RollOutWarrenton! As well as flexibility. It solves the problem of consistency, equitability, and addressing all of the requirements for ADA, Building, fire, and maintenance. It is an “all year” section and builds upon the success of the RollOutWarrenton! Project.

At the March 10, 2025, Council Works Session staff was directed to work with EOTW to “find a way” to make parklets work. We have been discussing minimum standards for parklets to ensure compliance with minimum safety codes that include building, fire, ADA, and maintenance.

Staff also conducted a public forum to discuss the improvement options as discussed at the March Council meeting. The public forum was held on March 25=6 with approximately 30 attendees. After discussion and Q&A, a poll was taken about what concept attendees wanted to see. It was a unanimous vote for Concept B.

EOTW provided the result of their survey which has support for Concept B. Our poll at our “Your Town Academy” also showed support for Concept B. Responses I have received from Council Members show majority support for Concept B.

Given the results for Concept B, staff has been working to develop a layout along Main St. to provide a working model of Concept B. This approach will provide us additional input on the movement to the

“Sidewalk Café” model as it will have the layout to “push” the sidewalk out. This will allow for additional outdoor dining without the need for parklets. We are working to have this available as soon as we receive confirmation from Council to continue to move in this direction at the April 8, 2025 meeting.

Our outreach for this project has been in several formats to include walking Main St and handing out information while discussing the options; social media and media posts; the public forum; and receiving surveys.

BACKGROUND

The RollOutWarrenton! Program is no longer applicable. Staff is moving to the sidewalk café provisions in our existing ordinance. This is a continuation from the November council meeting.

Our Project Manager presents two concepts for review. These concepts are for the proposed upgrades to the sidewalks along Main ST. These will increase the width of the sidewalks, install bump-outs, and ADA improvements. These will assist with implementation of the sidewalk café program.

If approved to continue to move forward with Concept B we will continue to work on the model layout as discussed.

If Council decides they would like to allow parklets, an ordinance must be drafted.

We have specific questions to address at this Work Session:

1. Concerns about locking in bump-outs (as in alternative B) and its long-term impact which may limit the kinds of businesses who would utilize these features. The additional sidewalk space will provide opportunities for walkability and display for any business. This also “opens” up the front façade of the businesses from the roadway. This concept has also been shown to encourage similar businesses if one moves out and helps create a more attractive space for future tenants. In other words, this helps replace a restaurant with a restaurant. This is also in line with our Walkability Study and our Complete Streets initiative from 2017.

2. Trade-offs of losing parking spaces (bad for retail merchants) vs. bump-outs (good for restaurants). The area to be “bumped out” concerns five parking spaces. These spaces will be “made up” as we improve the parking lots, specifically the lot behind Town Hall. As stated by the Strong Towns Representative at a presentation to Council, “we do not have a parking problem, we have a walking problem.”

3. Town liability mitigation options, such as an insurance rider, for parklet dining. Are there best practices from our insurance company that would allow for parklets while mitigating Town liability in a worst-case scenario, like a truck hitting diners on Main Street? Any use of the Public Right of Way must be permitted. The business using this space must have an insurance rider named the Town. The underlying requirement from insurance is that the Town must make sure we take every step to ensure minimum safety standards are met. Insurance aside, we must also consider ADA, Fire Safety, Building Code, and maintenance requirements. There is an expectation from the public that if a government allows an

activity or structure within our right of ways or on our properties, they meet minimum permitting and safety requirements.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Continue to work on the Main St improvements, Concept B, while creating a working approach to the existing sidewalk café provisions in our ordinance.

Service Level/Collaborative Impact

Continuing collaboration with businesses and managing a right of way use permit for the “Sidewalk Café” program.

Policy Direction/Warrenton Plan 2040

Economic and Fiscal Resilience Goals

E-1: Grow a strong, diversified, and resilient economy that supports residents and businesses alike.

E-3: Promote Warrenton as a cultural, entertainment, and arts center.

E-5: Be proactive in the Town’s economic development.

Transportation and Circulation Goals

T-2: Enhance the traveling experience by creating great streets.

T-3: Promote livability in the Town by creating great places where residents and visitors feel welcome and safe.

Fiscal Impact

Main St improvements are part of VDOT revenue share funding

Legal Impact

Required insurance forms required by applicants and legal review of the drafted application.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Copies of March Council Meeting Staff Reports
2. EOTW Survey results
3. Emails requesting this meeting
4. Copies of attachments from November Council Meeting

5. Main St concepts and staff report from Michale Wharton