

Merrimac St Walk Audit Summary

Completed June 3, 2025, 4:00-5:00 pm

Newburyport Livable Streets members led a walk audit of Merrimac Street between Warren Street and Pop Crowley Way. This section of Merrimac Street is a necessary walking and cycling connection to Cashman Park's playground and playing fields, and to the Harborwalk.

Participants

Newburyport Livable Streets

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Newburyport City Councillors

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Other Newburyport Residents

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WalkMassachusetts

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Walk Audit Route



Summary Observations

- Lack of sidewalk definition
 - Curbing is missing and/or there is no curb reveal (close to level of street pavement)
 - Lack of clear delineation between the edge of sidewalk, private parking lots, and the street (with curb cuts, landscaping, or other physical treatments)
- Poor sidewalk conditions -- sidewalk is cracked and broken, uneven and missing in some locations
- Wide, contiguous driveways – no indication of path of travel for pedestrians with visual impairments and no guidance for cars entering/exiting
- Lack of crosswalks in the areas where people most want to cross
 - Across Merrimac St at Cashman Park entrance
 - Across Kent St at intersection
 - Across Merrimac St on east side of Kent St intersection
- No street trees, landscaping, or shade structures which create a harsh and uncomfortable condition for pedestrians

Detailed Observations

North Side

- Sidewalk is cracked and uneven
- Sidewalk is narrow and partially obstructed by utility pole
- There is no crosswalk at this location, which is a desire path from the entrance to/from Cashman Park
- No pedestrian scale lighting



Looking west from Cashman Park entrance



Looking east across oil company driveways

- One long curb cut interrupted only by a utility pole
- No pedestrian scale lighting
- No clear delineation between the edge of sidewalk, private parking lots, or the street.
- No visual distinction for vision impaired to indicate pedestrian path of travel
- No curb reveal (granite curb is either buried or missing) between sidewalk and street
- No curb stops, landscaping, or other barrier between parking area and sidewalk/street



Sidewalk at oil company

- At driveway entrances on either side of Leary's there is no clear guidance (aka signage or pavement markings) indicating where drivers should enter and exit. The same conditions noted above for the oil company property also exist on this side (no clear delineation between edge of sidewalk and parking lots or street):
 - There is no truck loading area for the property. Delivery trucks often park along Merrimac Street obstructing sight lines and blocking the sidewalk and partially obstructing view of crosswalk.
 - No visual distinction for vision impaired to indicate path of travel along the sidewalk.
 - No curb reveal (granite curb is either buried or missing) between sidewalk and street.
 - No curb stops, landscaping, or other barrier between parking area and sidewalk/street.



Crosswalk at Leary's and Kent Street



Parking lot driveway at Leary's



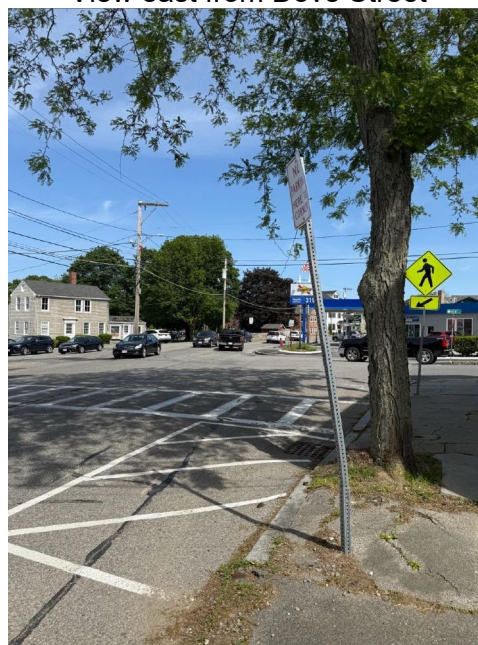
Leary's parking lot driveways (Dove Street on right)

South Side

- Poor sidewalk conditions
- No pedestrian scale lighting
- Vegetation on private properties obstructing sidewalk at some locations
- At Kent Street/Merrimac Street intersection
 - Missing crosswalk across Kent Street
 - Driveway on Kent Street at gas station creates unsafe condition for pedestrians and vehicles
 - Wide turning radii from Merrimac Street to Kent Street discourages vehicles from slowing down to make right turn from Merrimac
 - Lack of ADA compliant ramps and clear signage for crosswalks



View east from Dove Street



Looking east to Kent Street intersection



Kent Street intersection looking east

- No visual distinction for vision impaired to indicate path of travel along the sidewalk.
- No curb reveal between sidewalk and street.
- No curb stops, landscaping, or other barrier between parking area and sidewalk/street.
- No street trees, landscaping, or shade structures to provide relief from heat
- No pedestrian scale lighting



Park Lunch driveway looking east

Recommendations

Issue: Sidewalk conditions, comfort, and connectivity.

Short-term:

- Paint sidewalk edges where lack of definition exists (e.g. across wide driveways at Leary's, oil company, gas station, and Park Lunch).
- Paint and sign no parking zone on Kent St within 20 feet of intersection

Permanent:

- Better define commercial driveway entrances with curbing and driveway aprons and signage.
- Narrow commercial driveways to maximum 24' wide (for two-way) or 12' for one-way.
- Limit number of driveways to no more than one per property, or one-way in and one-way out for existing commercial properties.
- Replace and upgrade existing sidewalks to concrete with granite curbing, widen to 5' where feasible.
- Apply raised curbing along street and parking lot edges, require bumper stops where parking spaces abut sidewalk, introduce landscaping buffer where possible to make sidewalks more visible to drivers and to pedestrians.
- Add street trees.
- Add pedestrian scale street lighting.

Issue: Pedestrian safety at Kent Street Intersection – improve visibility, reduce crossing distances, reduce potential conflict points between pedestrians and vehicles, slow travel speeds

Short-term:

- Install flexposts and paint to extend pedestrian zone, tighten right turn from Merrimac to Kent
- Paint and sign no parking zone on Kent St within 20 feet of intersection
- Add advance yield markings and signs for a crosswalk

Permanent:

- Extend curb and sidewalk on west side of Merrimac/Kent intersection to reduce crossing distances, slow down vehicles turning right onto Kent St, and allow Kent St vehicles closer to the intersection for better sight distance
- Install pedestrian median island at existing crosswalk across Merrimac St
- Upgrade existing crosswalk to a raised crosswalk
- Add crosswalk and ramps across Kent Street leg of intersection
- Close driveway entrance to gas station from Kent Street
- Introduce traffic calming measures such as chicanes to slow traffic approaching intersection
- Evaluate potential for a mini traffic circle to slow traffic speeds and reduce conflict points for left-turning vehicles

Issue: Lack of safe street crossing at Cashman Park entrance

Permanent:

- Install ADA ramps and crosswalk across Merrimac Street at Cashman Park entrance
- Install pedestrian scale lighting
- Install RRFB or other pedestrian-activated signal
- Introduce traffic calming measures along Merrimac Street approaching crosswalk to slow traffic and alert drivers

Examples of Treatments and Strategies



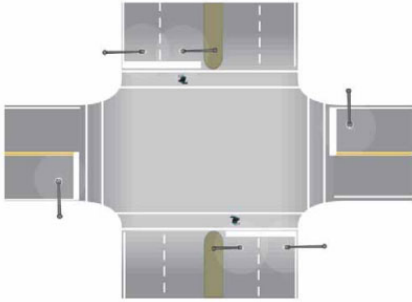
Chicanes and pinch points are curb extensions, planters, or other installations intended to narrow or shift the roadway; these counteract the fact that wide, open, and straight roadways encourage high driver speeds. (Source: *City of Seattle Design Standards*)



Quick build and permanent curb extensions (aka bump out)



Raised crosswalk with pedestrian yield markings (aka chevrons)



Pedestrian scale lighting illuminates pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks, paths, and crossings. Typically closer to the ground than roadway lighting.



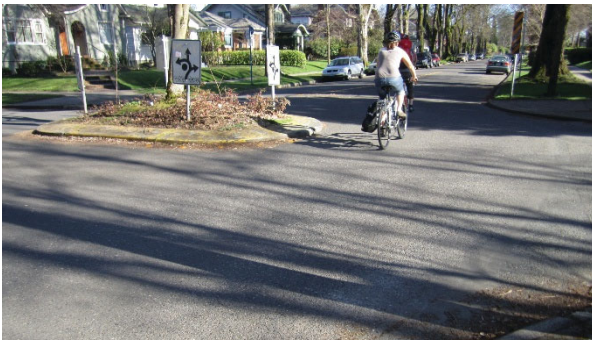
Pedestrian hybrid beacon (aka HAWK) signal



Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)



Advance warning signage for pedestrian crossing



Mini Traffic Circles lower speeds at minor intersection crossings and are an ideal treatment for uncontrolled intersections. They may be installed using simple markings or raised islands. (*Source: NACTO*)