



Town of Middletown Planning Department

350 East Main Rd., Middletown RI 02842 (401) 849-4027

MEMORANDUM

To: Paul A. Croce, Chairman
Planning Board Members

From: Ron Wolanski, Town Planner

Date: May 3, 2021

Re: Town Council request that the Planning Board research adopting an ordinance requiring esplanade-style sidewalks

During a recent meeting the Town Council referred a request to the Planning Board to investigate potential ordinance amendments to implement a requirement to install esplanade-style sidewalks whenever possible when new sidewalks are proposed. Such design includes a planting strip to be included between the edge of the sidewalk and the curb to provide more distance between pedestrians and vehicles resulting in a more pleasant and safer pedestrian experience. Please see the attached documentation provided by a Middletown resident, including a resolution adopted by the Town Council in 2004.

Please note that installation of new sidewalks as part of a subdivision or land development project are currently subject to the requirements of Section 616 subdivision and land development regulations (below) and the standard street cross section (attached), which calls for a planting strip between sidewalk and curb. These regulations do not apply to roadwork or sidewalk installations that are not subject to Planning Board review

Section 616 - Sidewalks

When located within the street right-of-way, sidewalks shall be located as shown in Appendix B. All materials and methods used in the construction of sidewalks shall be in conformance with the Rhode Island Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. Sidewalks shall be constructed of a four (4) inch thickness of Portland Cement pavement to a minimum width of four (4) feet and shall be set on a minimum sub base of eight (8) inches compacted bank run gravel and a base of four (4) inches of processed gravel.

If an ordinance amendment is drafted, and once the Board is satisfied with the final draft, it should be forwarded to the Town Council for consideration. If the proposal is an amendment to the zoning ordinance, the Town Council must then hold a formal public hearing before amendments are adopted. In support of its recommendation to the Town Council on a zoning ordinance amendment the Planning Board must make the following findings in accordance with the requirements of Section 45-24-52 of the Rhode Island General Laws:

(1) The proposed amendment is generally consistent with the Middletown Comprehensive Community Plan , including the goals and policies statement, the implementation program, and all other applicable elements of the comprehensive plan; and

(2) This recommendation is made in recognition and consideration of each of the applicable purposes of zoning, as presented in § 45-24-30 RIGL

Please contact me with any questions.

cc. Town Solicitor

KAREN ROARKE
26 RENFREW AVENUE
MIDDLETOWN, RI 02842

MEMORANDUM

TO: MIDDLETOWN TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: KAREN ROARKE
SUBJECT: CODIFYING COUNCIL RESOLUTION RE: SIDEWALKS
DATE: 4/8/2021

I respectfully request the Town Council consider adopting this 2004 Town Council Resolution as an ordinance so it may more readily be found in the Code Book to inform future road and sidewalk improvement projects in Middletown.

For information and discussion, I've attached the following:

- The Resolution of the Council, re: Endorsing esplanade sidewalks in the Town of Middletown that passed unanimously on October 18, 2004;
- The supporting memo from the Town Administrator at the time;
- Photos of examples of esplanade sidewalks in town, including the roads mentioned in the resolution;
- The packet I prepared in advance of the Purgatory Road sidewalk project meeting held March 23 that I shared with you previously.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to appearing before you at your regular meeting on April 19th.

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN
RESOLUTION
OF THE
TOWN COUNCIL

WHEREAS: Many American cities and towns, including Middletown, are beginning to consciously make pedestrian improvements by adding sidewalks with esplanade grass strips, planting trees in an effort towards slowing automobiles and encouraging street activities for pedestrians; and

WHEREAS: The Town's Comprehensive Plan encourages the Town Council to help make bicycling, walking, and public transit more appealing and accessible, so that they become the preferred way of traveling for the majority of trips; and

WHEREAS: Middletown needs to develop a balanced transportation system which includes public transit, automobiles, and plenty of safe, easily accessible places - including public streets and highways - where people of all ages can walk or bicycle; and

WHEREAS: Many of the existing power line poles abut the curb and would have to be removed at considerable cost should cement sidewalks be installed directly abutting the curb instead of installed with a grass strip between the curb and the sidewalk; and

WHEREAS: Many of the older sidewalks in Town on West Main Road, Wyatt Road, and Green End Avenue include an esplanade strip along the road; and

WHEREAS: Should there be a grass strip between the curb and the sidewalk, small trees could be planted to continue the work of the Middletown Tree Commission to beautify the streetscape and serve to calm traffic and provide shade to pedestrians; and

WHEREAS: A majority of the main roads in the Town of Middletown are State Roads and State Department of Transportation seeks to serve the desires of the Town Council in regards to designing and improving these roads to promote pedestrian activity and to ensure pedestrian safety.

THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED: The Town of Middletown resolves to plan, design, and construct all new streets and highways to serve bicyclists and pedestrians, in addition to motor vehicles by requiring, where possible, esplanade sidewalks to be installed on all roads within the Town of Middletown.

OCT 18 2004

Barbara L. Nash
TOWN CLERK



Town of Middletown

350 EAST MAIN ROAD • MIDDLETOWN, RHODE ISLAND 02842

Gerald S. Kempen

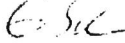
OFFICE OF TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

OFFICE: (401) 849-2898 • FAX: (401) 845-0400

EMAIL: TOWNADMINISTRATOR@CLMIDDLETOWN.RI.US

October 14, 2004

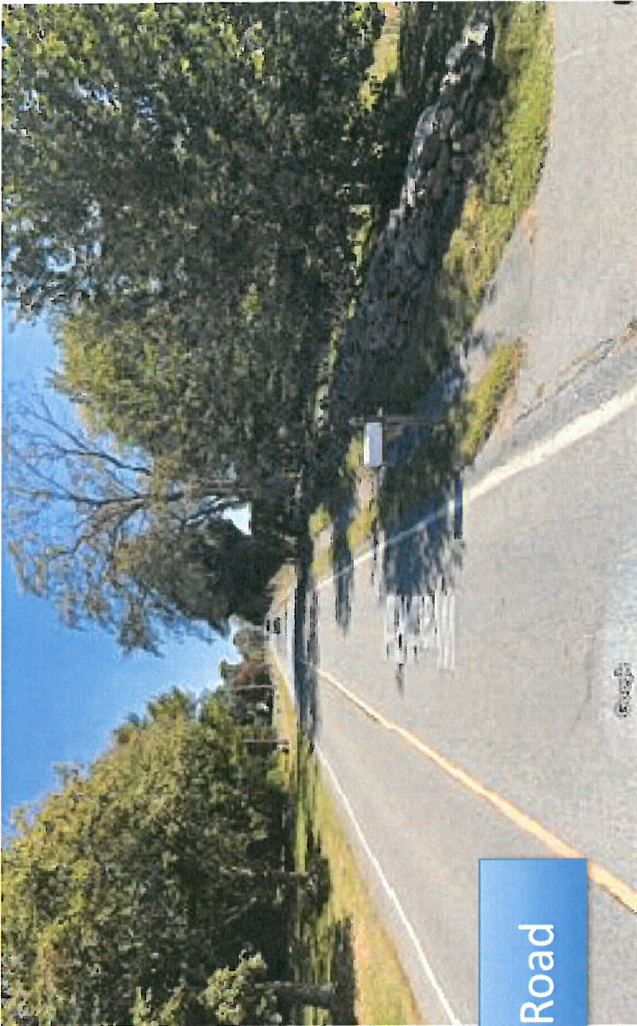
TO: The Honorable William J. Flynn and
Members of the Council

FROM: Gerald S. Kempen 
Town Administrator

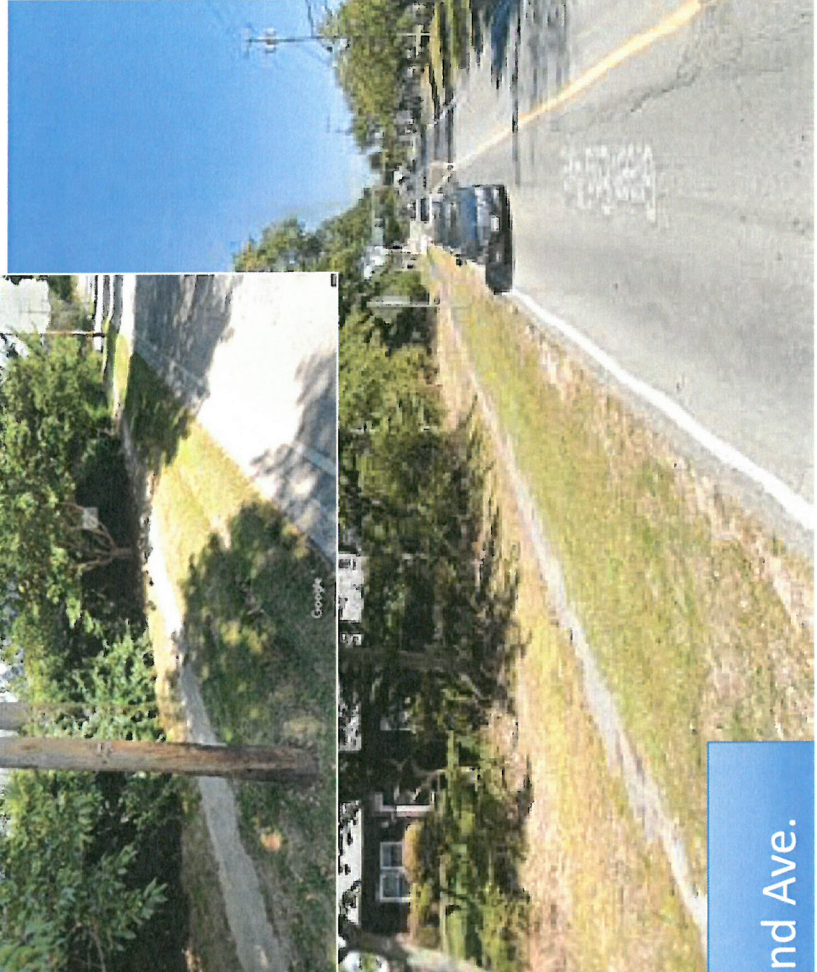
RE: Proposed Resolution to Add Grass
Strips With Sidewalk Construction

I have had the chance to read Councilwoman Roarke's proposed resolution to add grass strips separating sidewalks from paved roadways wherever possible in the Town of Middletown. I support the concept of adding esplanades wherever possible.

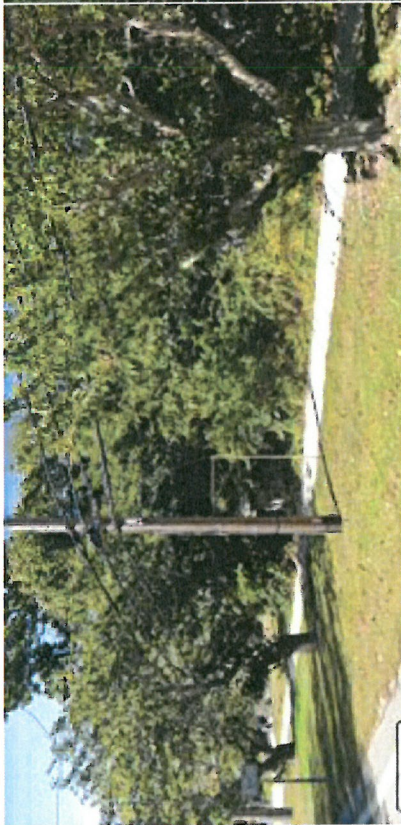
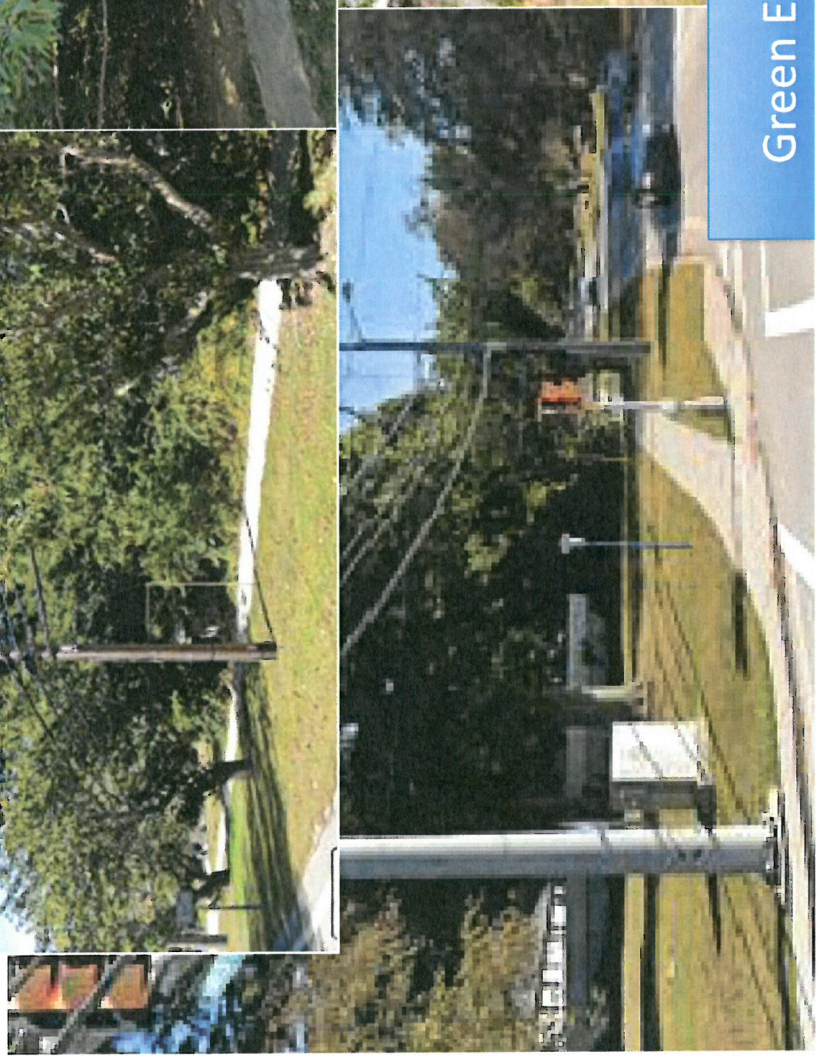
The presence of a grass strip separating sidewalks from traffic on a roadway acts to make pedestrians feel safer and therefore use of the sidewalk increases. By encouraging the use of alternative modes of transportation in ways such as this, we find that traffic is reduced and the general quality of life in town is improved.

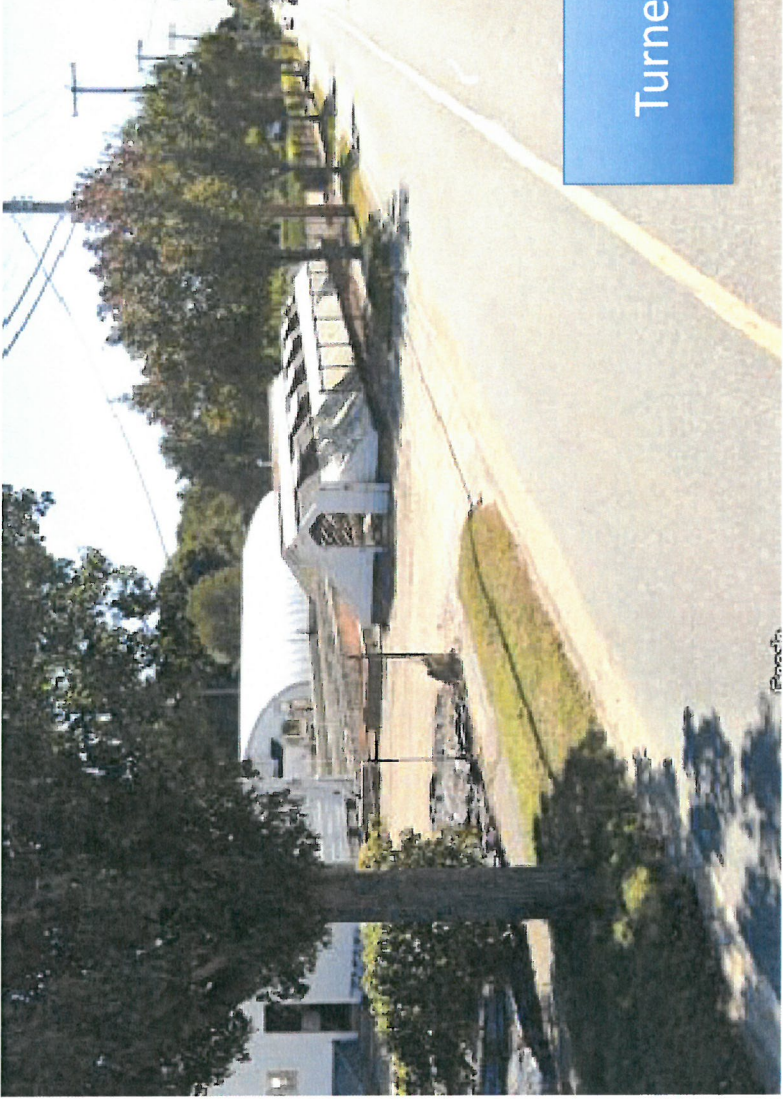
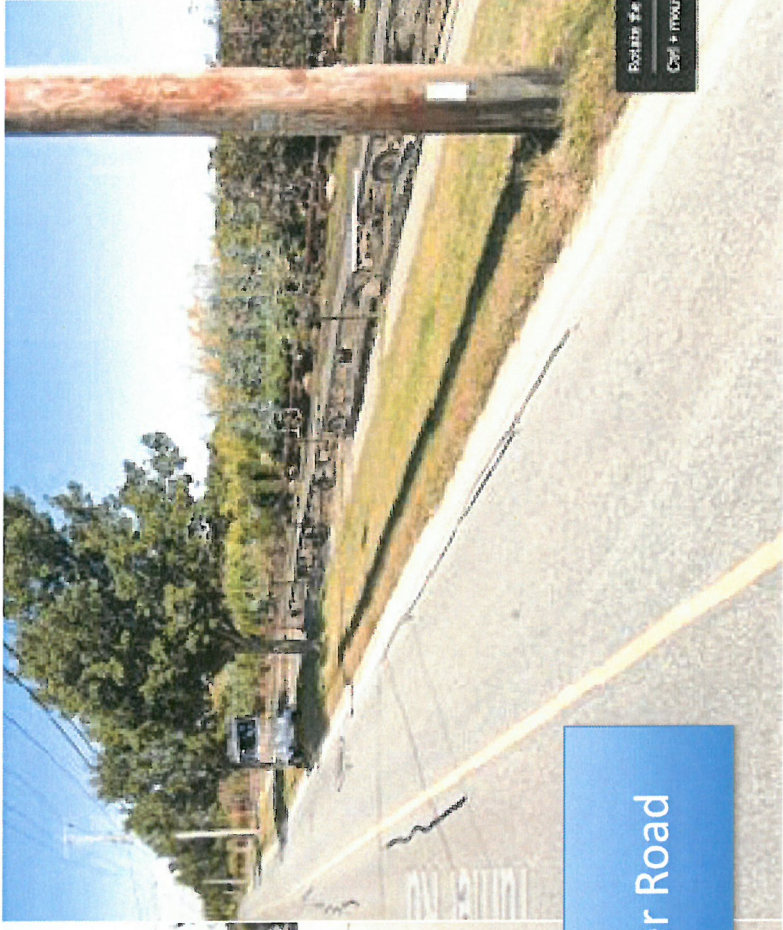
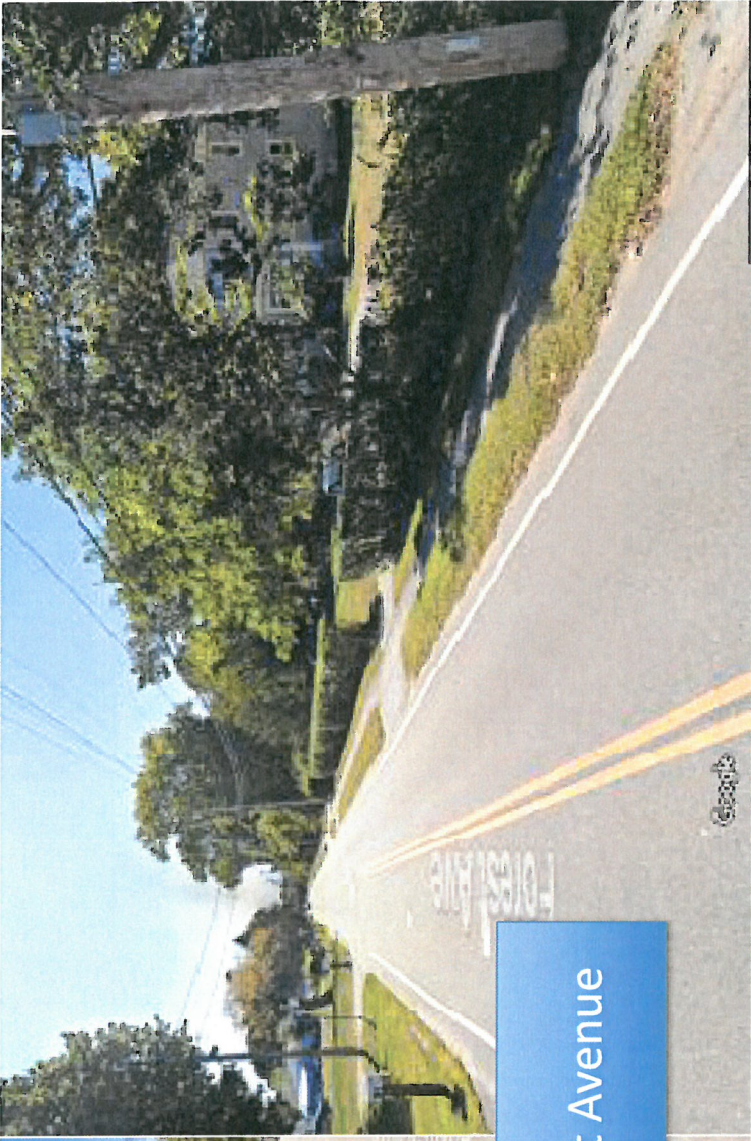


Wyatt Road



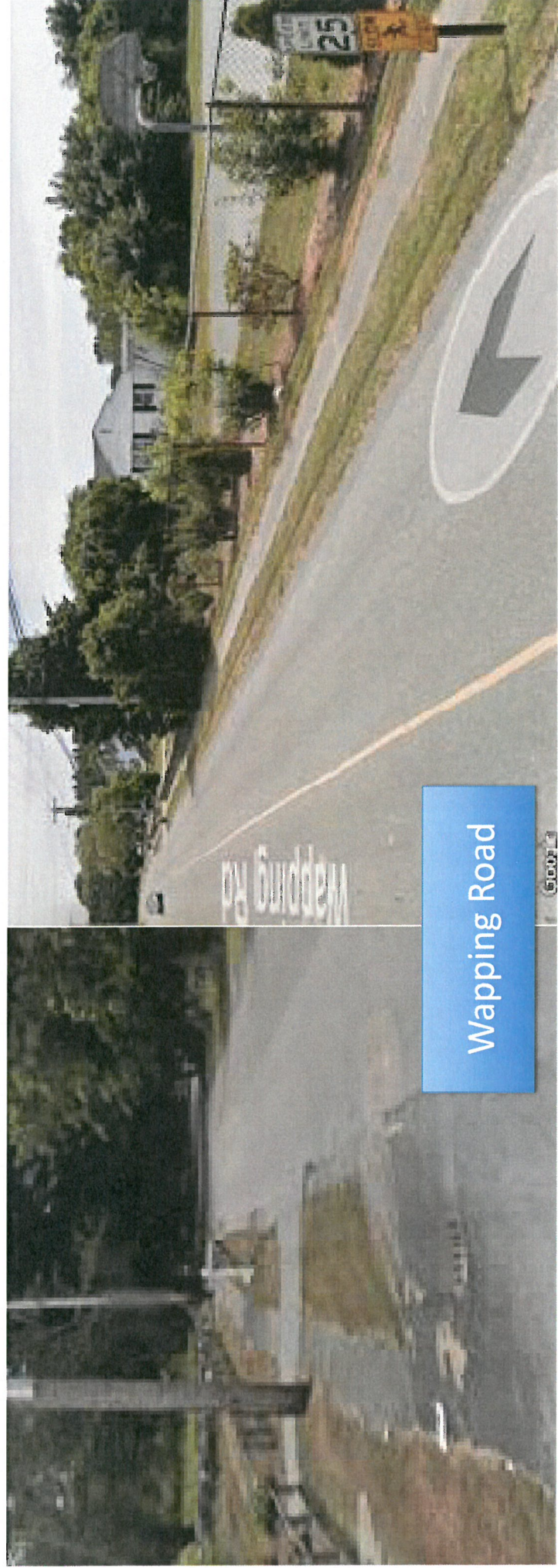
Green End Ave.



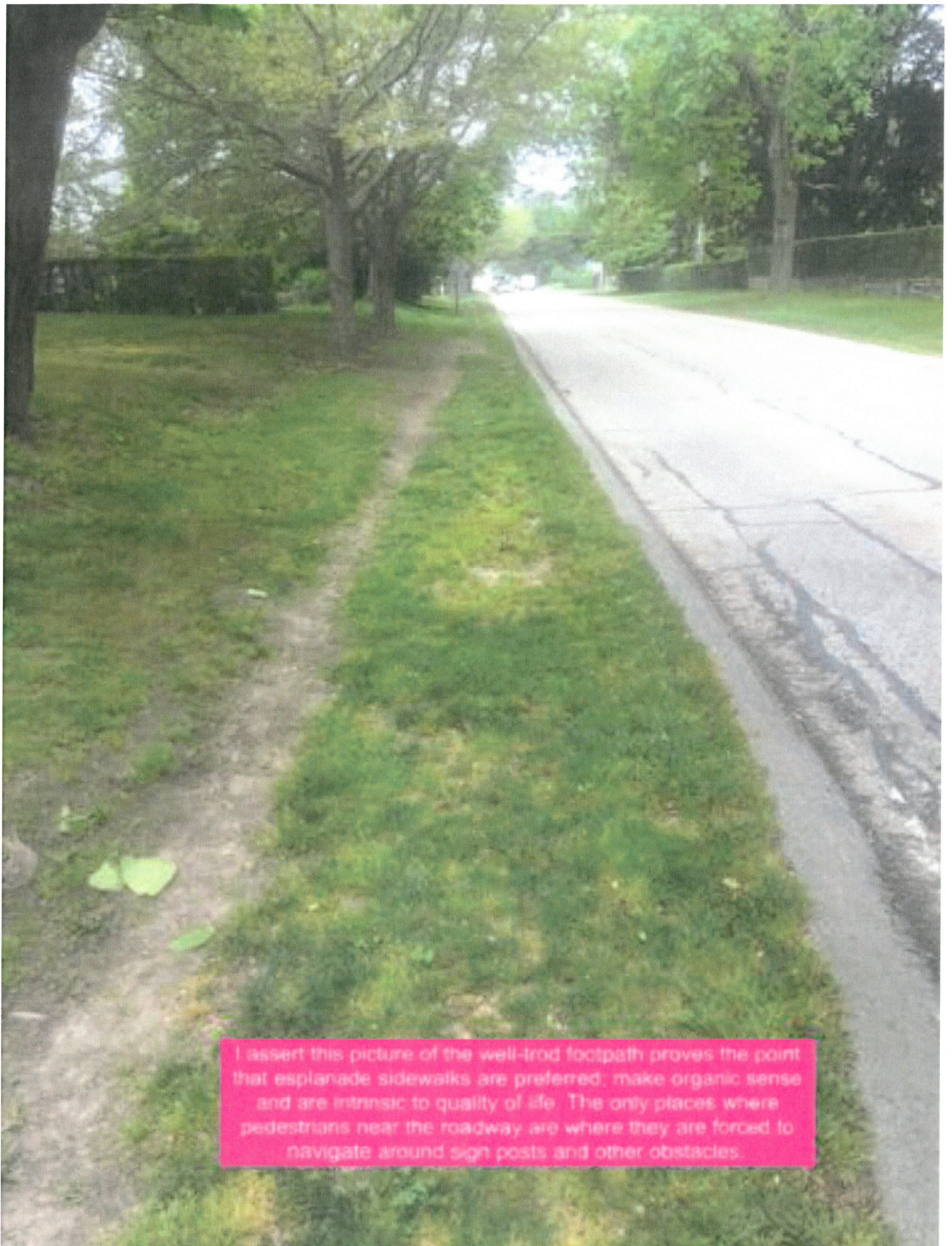




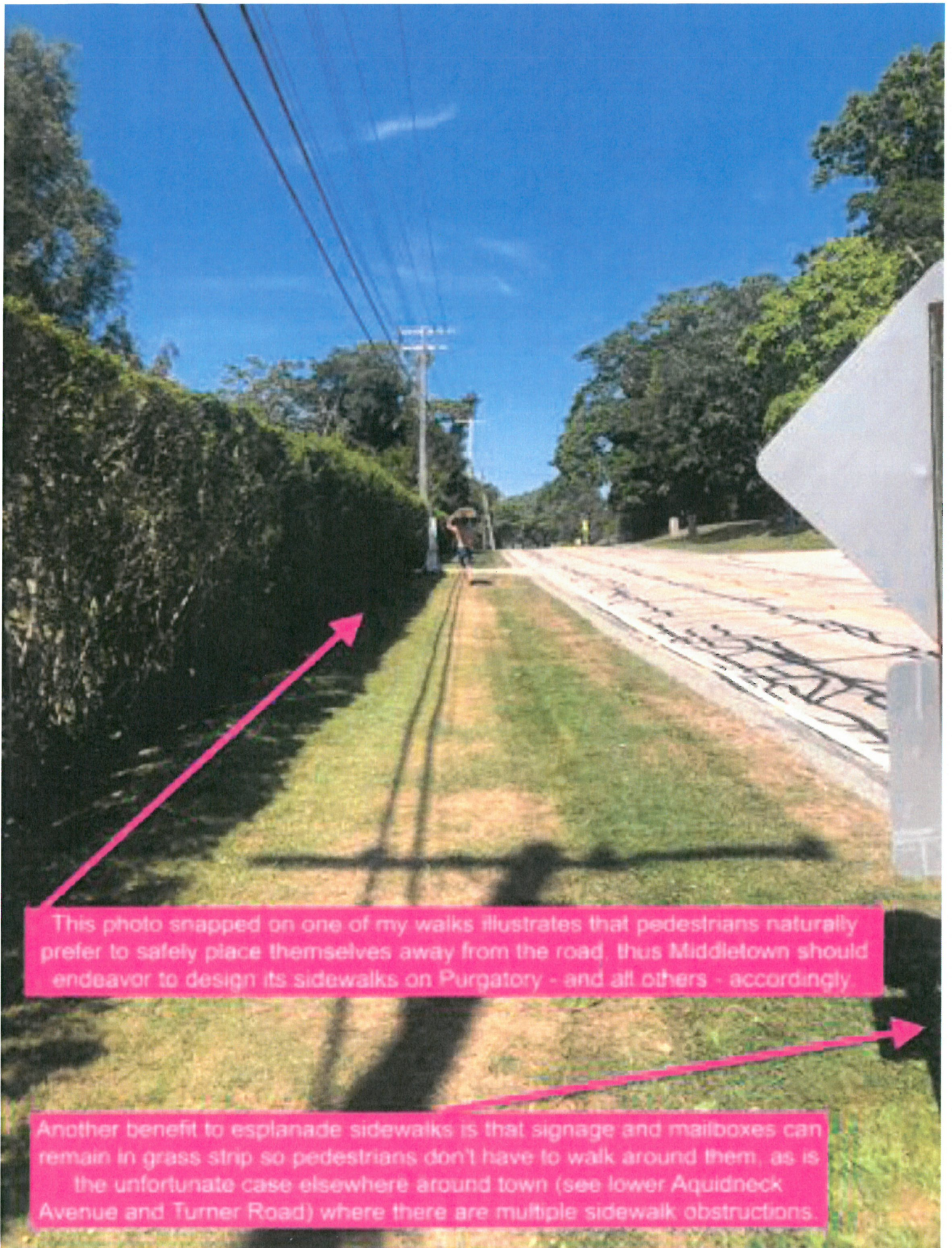
West Main Road



Wapping Road

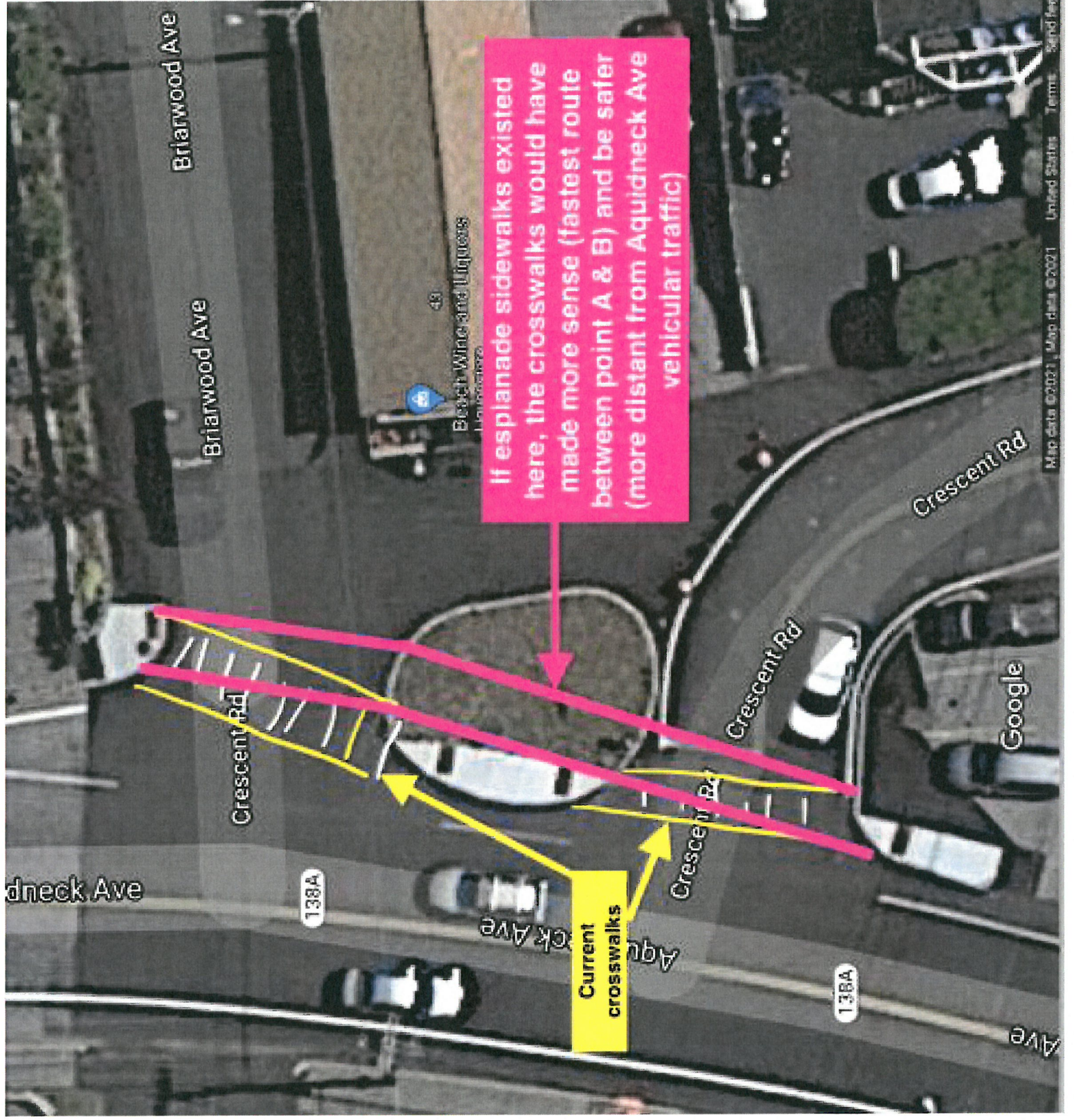


I assert this picture of the well-trod footpath proves the point that esplanade sidewalks are preferred: make organic sense and are intrinsic to quality of life. The only places where pedestrians near the roadway are where they are forced to navigate around sign posts and other obstacles.



This photo snapped on one of my walks illustrates that pedestrians naturally prefer to safely place themselves away from the road, thus Middletown should endeavor to design its sidewalks on Purgatory - and all others - accordingly.

Another benefit to esplanade sidewalks is that signage and mailboxes can remain in grass strip so pedestrians don't have to walk around them, as is the unfortunate case elsewhere around town (see lower Aquidneck Avenue and Turner Road) where there are multiple sidewalk obstructions.



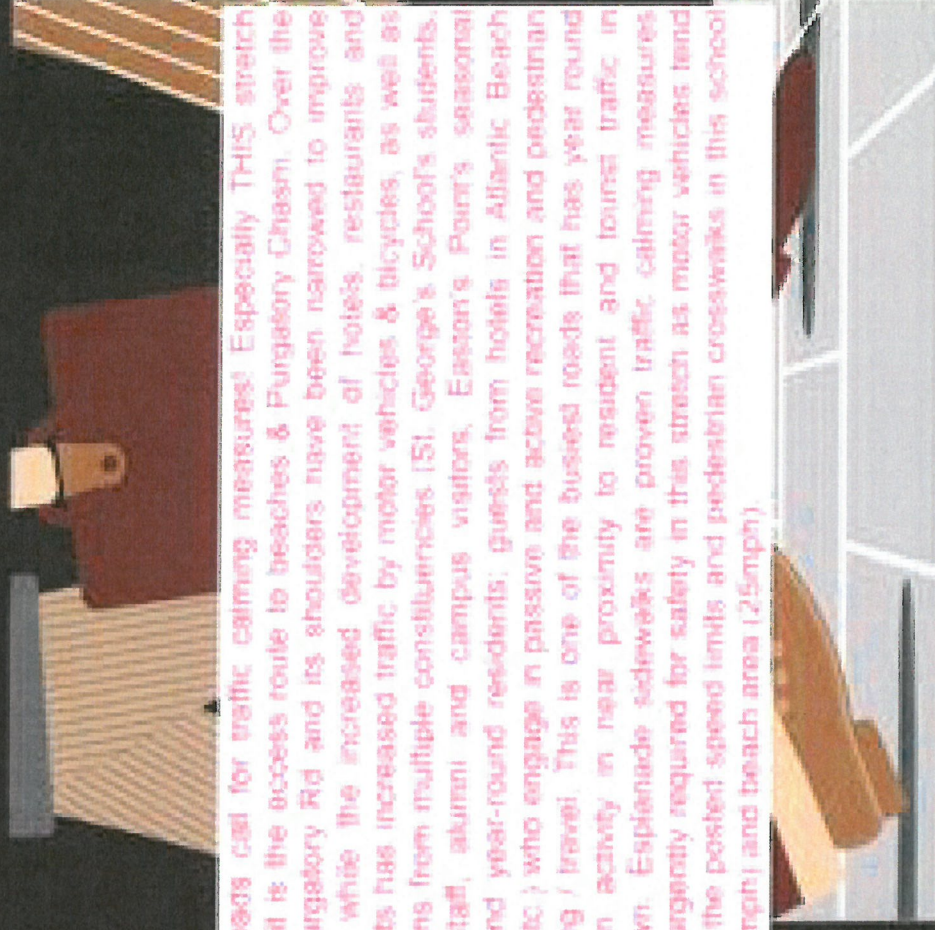
If esplanade sidewalks existed here, the crosswalks would have made more sense (fastest route between point A & B) and be safer (more distant from Aquidneck Ave vehicular traffic)

Current crosswalks

Purgatory Road sidewalk project meeting

Learn more about plans to
install new sidewalks along
the busy two-lane road on
Tuesday, March 23 at 6 pm

"Busy" roads call for traffic calming measures! Especially THIS stretch because it is the access route to beaches & Purgatory Chasm. Over the years, Purgatory Rd and its shoulders have been narrowed to improve drainage while the increased development of hotels, restaurants and rental units has increased traffic by motor vehicles & bicycles, as well as pedestrians from multiple constituencies (St. George's School's students, faculty, staff, alumni and campus visitors, Easton's Point's seasonal renters and year-round residents; guests from hotels in Atlantic Beach District, etc.) who engage in passive and active recreation and pedestrian commuting / travel. This is one of the busiest roads that has year round pedestrian activity in near proximity to resident and tourist traffic in Middletown. Esplanade sidewalks are proven traffic calming measures that are urgently required for safety in this stretch as motor vehicles tend to ignore the posted speed limits and pedestrian crosswalks in this school zone (20mph) and beach area (25mph).



MiddletownRI.com