

The Greater Newburyport Chamber of Commerce and Industry Supports the Proposal to Build a Parking Garage at the Titcomb/Merrimac Site.

The Greater Newburyport Chamber of Commerce and Industry backs the proposal to build a garage on the corner of Titcomb and Merrimac streets.

The Chamber initially voiced support in 2010 when the site, after thorough review and debate, was determined to be the best location for a garage, and in 2015 asked the state to release the \$5 million of funding that had been secured for this fully vetted project. Now, as plans and financing for a \$12.2 million 244-space intermodal transit and parking facility have solidified, we remain firmly in favor of the project.

An accessible garage, located at the entrance to downtown, right off Route 1, and across from Waterfront West, constitutes a long-awaited piece in the decades long parking puzzle that the City has been working diligently to solve.

“We’ve watched and waited for several years as garage plans and funds have come and gone,” said Ann Ormond, President of the Chamber. “The garage is a linchpin in our city’s master plan, and city-wide business growth depends on it. We urge the City Council to vote yes.”

Here is why the proposal earns the Chamber’s support:

- **It gets parking off the waterfront:** In a Feb. 3 letter to the Mayor, the Newburyport Redevelopment Authority (NRA) states it intends to move a “significant amount of spaces (100+)” off the waterfront, leaving no more than 150. That objective, the NRA writes, depends on finding other spaces that will make up for the loss. The garage would not only serve to move cars to a more suitable and manageable location, it opens the door to creating an expanded waterfront park.
- **It expands the walkable footprint downtown:** As residents and business people have expressed time and time again, they want an expansion of the waterfront park and they want it to be integrated with downtown. A garage is a cornerstone in the creation of a green, flourishing and more walkable community, especially in this location.
- **It is good for business:** With the majority of the downtown parking lots and street parking spaces subject to time limits, out-of-town visitors and residents who wish to stay more than two to three hours often have no choice but to interrupt what they are doing and search for a new spot – or leave with business unfinished. A garage would accommodate all-day parking, leaving people to browse stores and enjoy a meal without having to keep an eye on the clock. Ease-of-parking would further enhance Newburyport’s reputation as a destination community, thus leading to an increase in revenue from meal and room taxes. It will also encourage more businesses to locate here and invigorate business around the Route 1 intersection.
- **It eases congestion:** Current parking solutions force nearly all traffic through downtown in search of a space. On weekends and throughout the busy summer, fall, and holiday season, traffic is heavy as people drive in circles trying to find a place to park. With an option to park

right as they exit Route 1 or enter downtown on Merrimac Street, some traffic will be diverted immediately. The Chamber also continues to support the idea of a comprehensive way-finding study to easily direct people to all parking options, businesses, and our visitors' center, which will further enhance the visitor experience. We also support a plan for addressing unique employee- and resident-related parking issues.

- **It accommodates growth:** The immediate vicinity of the proposed garage is destined for new development as plans for Waterfront West come together. In the short term, the 400-plus seat Ale House slated to open this summer is likely to kick start the coming transformation, drawing more visitors downtown. Designed to accommodate future growth, the garage will be scalable, allowing the City to add another level if needed.
- **It promotes intermodal transit and our commitment to being a green community:** As the City continues to position itself as a walkable, greener community that facilitates the use of public transit and other means of transportation, the construction of an intermodal facility strengthens that image and effort.
- **It receives state and federal funds:** The City stands to receive \$7 million in funding – but only if letters of intent are signed by the end of March. The Chamber has lobbied in conjunction with Mayor Holaday for this funding and continues to be in support.

The need for a garage was recognized as long as 41 years ago. Since then, countless proposals have been launched and withdrawn, funding has been secured and lost, sites introduced and nixed.

As the idea of building a garage on the Green Street lot was recently re-introduced, it is important to remember that the site has been rejected more than once, including in 2010, amid objections that construction would be too disruptive to business owners and potentially worsen traffic congestion. In fact, it has been determined in various ways, multiple times, that the Green Street property is not an appropriate location. This only strengthens the Chamber's position in support of the Titcomb/Merrimac site.

The Chamber feels there is a truly viable and thoughtful proposal on the table. As such we urge the City Council to seize the opportunity – and funding – so our City may finally construct the garage that has been deemed vital to the future prosperity of the historic, green, and growing community that is Newburyport, Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Bailey". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Mark Bailey, Chair