



## Crash Analysis Studio – Nicoll Street & Willow Street in New Haven, Connecticut

### Introductory Trailer

**Chuck Marohn:** I want to give you two scenarios. Scenario number one a plane crashes. Scenario number two, two cars collide. In scenario number one, we pull out all the stops – we bring in the NTSB, we try to figure out exactly what went wrong. Scenario number two – we send out the cops, we sweep up the mess, and we go on our way.

**John Pattison:** If we, collectively – everyone on this call and the broader Strong Towns movement – if we do this right, we’re going to save thousands of lives.

**Edward Erfurt:** Mayors and local council members want to do the right thing. They have the ability to solve it. We’re going to help provide those tools for them.

### Session

**Tony Harris:** All right, hi, everyone. I see. We still have people joining the webinar. I will slowly get us started though I want to try and stay punctual this evening, if possible. Let me start by saying thank you for joining us, and welcome to this crash analysis studio session that strong towns is CO hosting this evening. We are really glad that you're here with us, engaging on this topic. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Tony Harris, and I am the Community Engagement Coordinator with strong towns, and I've been invited by our New Haven local conversation group, stronger Haven, to help moderate this session this evening.

Now this will be the 22nd crash analysis studio session that strong towns has been involved with as an organization, though we have done some coaching and outreach, and, you know, communication support with other communities too, especially since our beyond blame press conference that took place back in October of 2024 so I'm really happy that we're picking back up with these analysis sessions. I think they can be really powerful and can be a really kind of game changing entry point into conversation with different communities you know that are interested in street safety.

So in a couple moments, I will introduce you to the experts that we have on our call with us today. But first I just want to talk about why we're here. So we know that over 40,000 people die in automobile crashes in the United States alone every year. Now, 1000s upon 1000s more suffer traumatic injuries during these collisions. And despite the work of public safety officials, these crashes are still happening, and they're affecting all of our lives. Now, there's a prevalent misconception, right? That car crashes are caused solely by mistakes that drivers make. So looking at your phone, drinking alcohol, changing the radio, speeding.



The North American response to crashes focuses primarily on assigning blame, often assigning blame to drivers and sometimes to pedestrians too. We know that the reality is that crashes are actually caused by multiple factors, and when a traumatic crash occurs, we need to identify all the contributing factors that we can, learn all we can, and ultimately work to reduce the number of traumatic injuries and deaths that are plaguing our communities. So what you're going to see now is a session that uses our crash analysis approach, and our panelists today are looking at a crash that occurred at Nicoll Street and Willow Street in New Haven, Connecticut.

So I'll begin by introducing you to our experts, and from there, we will review the facts of the crash, and then our guests are going to help us assess the design factors that contributed to the collision. And I want to emphasize one more time, our goal is not to assign blame. Our objective, really is to learn as much as possible about what happened. You know what took place, identify contributing factors and make some suggestions for improving safety at this crash location.

So I'm now going to introduce our experts, and I think I'll start with Alder festa, who has served on the city of New Haven board of alders for the past 12 years, chairing the city services and environmental policy committee while also serving on the Finance Committee. Anna is a lifelong resident of New Haven, and her career was in the medical sales and services industry. So welcome Alder festa.

**Alder Festa:** Thank you. Be here. My pleasure. Thank you.

Next we have Caroline Tanbee Smith, who serves as the altar of Ward nine on the city of New Haven board of alders. Prior to serving on the board, she co founded collab, which is an accelerator with the mission of providing resources and reducing barriers to entrepreneurship for New Haven residents. And then third, we have Peter Clark, who is a New Haven resident. And Peter really loves to be active, so you can find him running, biking, hiking, rock climbing. Peter is also an after school math tutor for New Haven students through the organization new heights, and he's a big supporter of New Haven's local music scene. And Peter currently works as a software engineer at Yale University.

And then finally, we have Rishabh Mittal, who is a transport planner and has recently started his own consulting practice in New Haven. He believes that we all live a multimodal life, and he wants to help build a transportation system that gives everyone the freedom to make choices while ensuring safety, comfort and reliability for all modes of transport.

So I'm going to go ahead and walk us through the details of this crash in New Haven and. And to do that, I'm just going to share my screen.

Okay, you should be able to see my PowerPoint there. So let's start with what we know. We know that Zabriena Vega and Christina brown collided at the intersection of Nicoll and Willow streets in New Haven. Vega was driving a Honda Accord northbound on Nicoll Street, and Brown was driving a Hyundai westbound on Willow Street. The crash occurred at 7:57am,

on November 7, 2024

and when I looked at weather reports, they told me it was a partly cloudy morning with winds at around five and a half miles per hour in New Haven on that particular day.

Now, Vega reported that she stopped at the stop sign on Nicoll Street, and that brown collided with her as she was going through the intersection. Brown said that the Honda Accord approached from her left and cut across her path, and that she was unable to avoid colliding with the Accord, so the speed limit on both streets is 25 miles per hour, and I believe that's a fairly standard limit for neighborhood roads in this particular area as well.

Now on this slide, you can see the crash location marked by this red pin right toward the center there, and we know that the crash occurred in the westbound lane of Willow Street.

And then on this next slide, this is a diagram that I believe Rishabh pulled from some of the supporting material that he collected, again, illustrating, you know, the two motorists and the directions that they were traveling.

Now here we've zoomed into the crash location a little bit closer. And I've illustrated

our motorist on Nicoll street with orange here and their direction of travel, and then our motorist on Willow Street here in blue, their direction of travel. And then just that approximate crash location is outlined in red.

Now fortunately, with this crash, there were no fatalities, though, Vegas passenger sustained a bruise under her left eye and both cars were damaged. The crash report told us that the Honda Accord sustained right side rear section damage, and the Hyundai had functional damage to its front section. And the crash report also indicated that Vega was listed at fault for the crash, for running the Nicoll street stop sign.

And it appears that body worn, body worn camera footage was listed as available in that crash report, though I don't believe we gained access to that footage as a part of preparing for this session.

So a little more on the overall conditions of the crash location and this site. So Willow street features an eastbound and a westbound lane, and then Nicoll street features north and southbound lanes with street parking available. Now this intersection isn't signalized, but traffic in both directions. On Nicoll street encounters stop signs,

and then on Willow street, there are also crossings marked, and there are some yield pedestrian signs as well.

So Rishabh and his volunteers pulled some photos of the crash location while they were out gathering data, and I just want to take us through these briefly to try and give you a feel for the area that we're talking about. Right? So on this first slide here, you're seeing what it looks like to approach that Nicoll street stop sign as a northbound motorist.

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And then this slide shows that same vantage point. We're just a little bit closer to the intersection, so you can see the stop sign. You can see the stop bar painted on the ground here.

And then these two Photos depict what it's like to approach the intersection as a westbound motorist on Willow Street.

And as you're approaching, you're going to see several pictures that have this Shell Station kind of highlighted,

and then these two photos are intended to show the intersection a bit more in its totality. So the one on the left here is taken from the southwest corner looking sort of Northeast, and then the other from the northwest corner looking more southeast.

And then these three images, the two on the left show the crosswalks on either side of Willow street, so you can see the striping that's available there Right. And then the third one shows a car that is stopped, either stopped right at the stop bar on Nicoll street, or maybe even a little bit over that stop bar.

And then we included these two shots here to show an eastbound perspective on Willow street. So this would be opposite of the direction that Christina Brown was driving. The one on the left is just a little bit further away from the intersection and.

And the one on the right is, of course, kind of right on top of the intersection.

And then Rishabh and his peers managed to get some measurements of the intersection where the crash happened too. So on Nicoll Street, we see that there are two through traffic lanes, and each of them are 10 feet wide. So one's going north, one's going south. And then there are parking lanes, one on either side of the street, and those were measured to be seven feet wide. Now there are planters on either side of the road, those are five feet wide a piece. And then the sidewalks on either side are either six feet or six and a half feet wide. So that would make the distance across the pavement 34 feet. And then when you add in those planters and sidewalk areas, that width jumps up to 54 and a half feet.

And then on eastbound Willow Street, we are seeing two through traffic lanes that measure in at 15 feet wide apiece. The planters on either side of the road are four feet wide, and then the sidewalks are each five feet wide, and that makes the distance across the pavement 30 feet, and that distance jumps up to 48 feet when you add in the planters and the sidewalks.

And then on westbound Willow we're seeing 21 and a half foot wide lanes for through traffic, and then a seven foot wide lane for parking. The sidewalks on either side are each five feet wide, with either sidewalk trees or utility poles taking up an additional four feet on either side. So similar to eastbound, that makes the distance across the pavement 30 feet wide. And then that total jumps up again to 48 feet when you include the planters and the sidewalks.

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So a little more on the development pattern here. You know, we would describe this area as sort of mixed use and multi family. If you were to go for a walk through the neighborhood, you're probably going to see a variety of residences. Some of them would include single family homes. And then you're also going to encounter some commercial and retail establishments as well. So as I mentioned earlier, there's that Shell gas station right on the corner of the intersection that we're looking at. And then there are a few restaurants nearby the intersection as well. And I'm going to take us to this surrounding area map to point out a few things. So up here in this area, I believe Wilbur cross High School is located, and then down on this side, we have East rock community magnet school. So that's two schools that are just a few blocks from the crash location.

If you can see my pointer... it doesn't seem to be showing up. The main road that is cutting through here is just about three blocks up from where the green is on the right hand side up into the neighborhood area.

The intersection itself is only a few blocks from both one and off ramps for interstate 91 right? So interstate 91 is the yellow road that's down here. Now I see my cursor, and I wanted to point out that at these connecting points, you're actually going to see two lanes of traffic in either direction, and as you're moving up into the residential kind of commercial area, those two lanes narrow up into one lane, is my understanding.

And then Rishabh and his group of volunteers, group of friends, also conducted, conducted a speed study for us as well, that I wanted to point out, they conducted the study under typical free flow traffic circumstances, and gathered a few key pieces of information. So there were 413 cars tracked, and 57.3% were found to be going over the speed limit.

Interestingly, only five cars were found to be going 10 miles per hour or more over the limit. So I believe that would be at 35 miles per hour or higher, and then the 85th percentile speed, or the speed at which 85% of drivers were found to be traveling at or below that speed was 29 miles per hour, so I believe that's four miles per hour over the speed limit.

So I'm going to stop sharing my screen for now,

and I would like to turn to our panel. Maybe Alder Smith, maybe we could start with you, if you would like to tell us you know, what you think might have contributed to this, this crash right in terms of factors and information that we've reviewed today or reviewed up to this point. And I will invite you to feel free to screen share if there's anything on like Google Street View, or slides that you might want to point out as well.

**Alder Smith:** Yeah. Thank you so much. Tony, just a few thank yous. Thank you to strong towns for hosting these sessions. Peter and Rishabh, thanks for just taking initiative as two neighbors to apply for this intersection to be featured. Thanks for Alder for.

Festa and thank you to I believe director Zinn and director Sandeep from the city are on the call as well, and just all the neighbors you know, Alder festa and I over the fall, collected 200 signatures from neighbors who

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want to see investment in this intersection. It's one of those intersections for those that don't live in New Haven. If you say Willow and Nicoll, almost everyone in the neighborhood knows what you're talking about. So glad we're talking about this today. To your question, Tony, you know, you brought up the highway. And I think, I think the highway plays a played a big role in this particular crash, but also a lot of the crashes. Because, you know, I think the accident happened in the morning 754 so am, people are going to work. I think that, you know, Willow Street is a street that people are rushing to go to work or to go home and rushing off to go home.

And I think that plays a large role in some of the speed issues you see, and the rush to get the rush to get home. And so I think that's a surrounding context of, I think the entirety of Willow Street. Another, another factor is that the moments of pause that happen on Willow as people are rushing to get home or rushing to get to work are, you know, on foster Street, and then you don't have a stop sign or some sort of interruption until Mitchell. And so it goes Foster, and then Nicoll Nash and Mitchell. And frankly, if you, if you stand at Mitchell and Willow, almost everybody, at least one car, passes through the red light

after, after it comes on. And so

I think that I can understand from the perspective of a driver, you're rushing to go home, you're rushing to get to work. You know that will Mitchell is coming up, or you know that foster Street is coming up, and so you're rushing it through these two intersections. I think the last thing I'll bring up, and then I want to pass it over to Alder festa, is sight lines. So in this particular intersection you have, you have some trees, it's pretty tight intersection you have. The irony is, actually the pedestrian signs that say yield to pedestrians are also actually blocking view views in many cases. And so I think if you're on Nicoll driving and trying to pass through Willow, or, frankly, also if you're on Willow and you're you're trying to be, you know, even a cautious driver, who's you? Who's trying to think about pedestrians, trying to think about navigating it thoughtfully. The sight lines make it sometimes difficult to do. I know I've heard from neighbors who are driving in that intersection, and they want to be thoughtful stewards. They want to be thoughtful drivers, but can't always see very well. And so if you're driving out from Nicoll like one of the individuals who's doing, you have to inch inch inch, to try to see around the tree or see around again, ironically, the pedestrian yield signs, and you always feel like you're taking a little bit of a leap of faith when you take the turn. And so it's something that should deeply be addressed. But I'll pass it to Alder festa. Here's your thoughts.

**Alder Festa:** Thank you, and thank you to the panelists as well, and to Alder Smith for helping with, hopefully, some guidelines with this very challenging intersection. So Alder Smith touched on a lot of the challenges with this intersection. There's an on off ramp that leads to Willow street, there's line of sight concerns. The line of sights are many. It's it's

the trees in the tree line that probably need to be pruned. There are cars sometimes parked to the corner where they're not supposed to be and affects the line of sight issues. There's a Connecticut transit bus stop right in front of the gas station blocks your line of sight at times. And I fear for the pedestrians that are either trying to cross or getting off the bus and trying to cross to get to the other side of Nicoll I'm sorry, of Willow Street, because cars will go around the bus and it's scary. There's times when I'm I'm actually at the

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stop sign, honking my horn to try and warn the pedestrian or whomever, to get out of, you know, danger. So it's a challenging, you know, intersection with, again, line of sight issues due to sometimes the bus stop being there, cars parked to the corner, trees in the tree line. And if you look at the design of Willow Street, it kind of even almost curves a little bit, so it changes your perspective when you're trying to cross the street, or even trying to cross the intersection in a car or a bike.

You know, I put some notes down here, you know,

yeah, the gas station parked cars. I mean, as you can see there, it's almost everything all in one

that is affecting it. And as Alder Smith mentioned there, the only stop sign is on the Nicoll side. There's a

There's no four way stop, there's no stoplight,

no type of, you know, speed humps or anything of that nature, to try and slow the traffic down from foster to Mitchell drive. We also have to remember that there's a lot of pedestrian action, because there's a brewery on Nicoll street, there's a salon, there's a gym, there's East rock market, which is a food hall. There's a lot going on, which is great, but it's also dangerous, so something does need to be done to try and make it safer for everyone. I think I touched on everything I wanted to mention. And again, absolutely,

yeah, thank you. Thank you. That's a really helpful description. And with what's been laid out so far, I mean, almost sounds like a perfect storm of circumstances for really making this area like high risk right for motorists and pedestrians alike. Peter, can we ask you to weigh in on factors? I think you were involved in some of the information gathering, and I'm curious to hear your thoughts.

**Peter Clarke:** Yeah, I

Yeah. So I live right in the neighborhood, very close to here. I drive and walk through here all the time.

And yeah, I did. I helped with the data collection. We did that on a weekend, so it would be interesting to see if, you know, there's different speeding when people are rushing to try to get to work or coming home from work,

but yeah, I mean driving through here, there's definitely,

I feel pressure, or like, yeah, there feels like there's pressure to drive fast. People are trying to rush from yeah between the foster street light and the Mitchell drive light.

And so I feel like that can make it. You know, people are driving fast, so it'll be harder to,

you know, you're coming up on anyone that gets in your way a lot faster, and anyone who might be pulling out of Nicoll street onto Willow, or trying to cross through Willow.

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You know, since people are driving fast on Willow, that might make it harder to judge how long a driver on Willow might take to get to you, because you might expect someone to be

coming a bit slower based on the size of the street and everything. But people are driving pretty fast down Willow.

Yeah, again, I think there's sightline issues.

As a pedestrian, I know we're talking about a motor vehicle crash, but as a pedestrian, it's very tough to cross here, because people are rushing through, and cars generally do not stop for pedestrians waiting at the crosswalk.

Yeah, I think that's the main issues are, you know, it's close to 91

people are leaving or going to the interstate, and so I feel like there's somewhat of a,

you know, driving on the interstate mentality, but at this point you're at the you're on the edge of a residential neighborhood, but you are in a residential area when you're driving in this part of a willow. So there's a real conflict of,

yeah, speeding and how safety on the streets?

**Tony Harris:** Yeah, absolutely, well. And just thinking about, like the schools and the brewery and these certain things that might suggest walkability, right? And then when you were saying cars not necessarily stopping for pedestrians, sort of this, like culture that might be built, or at least a driver mentality. It sounds like, yeah, it could be an exacerbating, exacerbating component of this, for sure, for sure. Thank you, Rishabh, could we come to you next on factors?

**Rishabh Mittal:** Yeah, sure. I'd like to share my screen. Sure.

**Tony Harris:** I'm seeing causes at Nicoll street on the screen.

**Rishabh Mittal:** So, yeah, I mean at this intersection, I think there have been like 28 crashes in the last five years, and out of which majority of the crashes, more than 20 crashes have a very similar story, and they all start with the driver at Nicoll missing the stop sign. So I mean, if we are to try. Try to understand why is this happening over and over again?

So this is an image when when a person is approaching the intersection from Nicoll Street and going north towards east rock. At the first instance, it seems like Nicoll Street has priority over the crossing traffic of below street. I think this misperception is being created like by two things, first and the most obvious is that Nicoll Street is wider than below street, so Nicoll Street is 34 feet curve to curb, whereas Willow is only 30 feet and then the second feature is that below has these painted crosswalks, while Nicoll does not.



So these two design features, I think, might be signaling to the driver that Nicoll has priority, whereas in reality, it is the other way around and Willow has priority over Nicoll, and the only thing that is informing us about this is this stop sign.

So I and the stop sign is just too far to the right I feel and with the stop sign very easy to miss an outside driver's immediate field of view, and the other design elements telling the driver on Nicoll that they have priority. So I feel like the driver are following the design and they move through the intersection without stopping, and this is exactly what happened at at this crash.

I think if we kind of see Nicoll, sorry Willow at Willow, the vehicle speeds are high, I think that might lead to narrowing the drivers field of vision and create more like a tunnel vision so high speed, narrow vision makes them less aware of the surroundings. This reduces the reaction time to unexpected events, making them more crash prone overall. So yeah, I think that's what, that's what I would say.

**Tony Harris:** Absolutely thanks for for laying that out. And I think what really drove that home for me, when you were saying like, drivers following the design cues around them on both of those streets, I think that's a really substantive component to be thinking of when we're looking at this intersection.

Great any further factors from anyone or any like responses or thoughts with regards to, like, how you move through this intersection on a regular basis?

**Peter Clarke:** I would just add, you know, similar to it being tough for pedestrians To cross at the crosswalks, you know, at a busy time, if you're a car driving from Nicoll street and you want to cross over Willow, you might feel it might be tough to find an opening where you can get all the way through the intersection. So I feel like some of these kinds of accidents could be caused by, you know, people losing, losing their patience of waiting for an opening on Willow, so they just try to gun it across when there's a small opening, but there's not enough Time to for the drivers on Willow to react.

**Tony Harris:** Yeah. Yeah, that's a really great point. And in one of our previous sessions, I remember speaking with a professional about how how accurately we can assess, like, how quickly we can move across multiple lanes of traffic. And I think it's interesting when you get past, you know, two or three lanes, the accuracy starts to dramatically drop. So, yeah, good point. Alder Smith?

**Alder Smith:** a couple thoughts. One is, I think would want to just elevate the experience of a cyclist as well. I mean, it doesn't surprise me, in some ways, that cyclists haven't been brought up too much in this conversation.

Station, in part because, as a cyclist myself, I never bike on Willow. I wouldn't even imagine biking on Willow. Why would I do that? That's, it's, it's, it's terrifying the idea of biking on Willow. But I think that's a question like, do we want Willow to be a street where cyclists feel comfortable and confident to cycle? And I think all of us would say yes. And so I think that's a factor here. I think, I think when I bike, I just, I will just avoid Willow at all costs and just find another way.

And Nicoll is pretty good for for cycling, but I think that's something I wanted to just bring up, is that Willow is just currently not a safe place for cyclists, and I rarely see cyclists on Willow. And then second, I think Rishabh, we brought up so many good points about kind of how the streets are designed to sort of signal activity. And I remember one addition to that is Amanda, an amazing neighbor who lives on Nicoll Street, who has been longtime advocate for investments in this intersection for a long time. She might be on this call, she brought up an interesting point that the gas station itself is a bit of a signal that you're coming off the highway and you see the gas station, we can't change the gas station, but that the it reminds you a place where you can speed. It reminds you of a place that isn't residential, where there aren't students. It was close by at the largest high school in our entire city, nearby, walking to and from school, and I thought that was an interesting point, that if you're from the driver's perspective, driving off the highway and you see the gas station in and of itself, just signals to you, maybe this is a place where I go fast and there aren't going to be a dense area of homes and residents and students who are walking nearby.

Yeah, those are really, really great points. It's

interesting to me what you were saying about, you know, avoiding Willow at all costs. And it can be really easy to forget cyclists and other road users right when they're not particularly involved in the crash. So thank you for bringing that up.

Okay,

yeah, Alder festa,

**Alder Festa:** so you know, I'll add to that in the sense that I too, advise Even my kids, the neighborhood kids,

even, you know, driver friends, to take actually Foster Street, because there's a light there, and you proceed with caution. Even with the light, you have to proceed with caution, because if the light is turning yellow, that means speed up and go. It doesn't mean slow down to stop, you know. And stop signs sometimes are just, you know, you genuflect at them. You don't actually

stop full stop and then crawl like you're taught in driving school, although that was a long time ago, so I'm not sure what they teach these days, you know, we have to remember too that Willow Street is considered an emergency route.

So I don't know what that plate rope that plays into any of this,

but with Nicoll and Willow you have to really proceed with with caution. It's treacherous. I avoided at all costs, no matter you know,

if definitely walking, there's no way I'm going to cross there biking, forget it absolutely not,

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unless you have body armor on. But it is. It's a very scary intersection. There's been multiple accidents where even the house at the corner, whose chain link fence has come down a few times it gets repaired, comes down again. They finally stopped replacing the fence because it it wasn't worth it. And that's pretty scary to find a car in your lawn,

you know. So so with that in mind, my main point was, there is an emergency route that we need to consider. But of course, you know, we shouldn't have to tell people to avoid a street. We shouldn't have to tell them take a different route.

All our streets should be safe, and I think it's, it's everyone's responsibility. Drivers need to slow down.

You know pedestrians, you know cross at crosswalks, cyclists follow the rules that are supposed are designed to be followed. It's all of our responsibility. But you know, at the same time, we need to have safe streets for everyone.

**Tony Harris:** Thank you, absolutely. Thank you. That's a really valuable thing to point out, that it's an emergency route too. Okay. If we don't have anything further on factors, we can definitely move toward recommendations. I would ask, I guess, Alder Smith, to start us off again. You know, anything that comes to mind with regards to, like, improving safety or security in this intersection or kind of, in the surrounding areas. Feel free.

**Alder Smith:** It's a good question. I mean, I get very curious what Rishab and Peter have to say, you know, given their expertise, but I think I say, it makes me think, Okay, what's the problem we're solving for?

Here. And I think that, you know, I think bottom line foundation, it's safety. How do we how do we ensure there's never a crash here again? How do we ensure no one ever gets hurt at this intersection?

I think also, in addition to, you know, having a vision zero perspective, it's also, how do we make this intersection feel safe like even beyond the crash. How do we make it feel safer? I I kind of think about Willow as a bit of a a bit of a sort of divide between these two parts of the neighborhood. And I think so, in addition to making it safer, can we imagine an intersection that we're really proud of, investments in intersection that make it really make us really proud, where, you know, parents aren't telling students to avoid it. Where it's, it's, it's an area we feel that actually kind of reconnects those different parts, potentially even spurring economic development, etc, and certainly a safe route to school. So those are the problems that I think we're solving for both tangible safety, but also the experience of safety. And given that, I think a few of the recommendations that come to mind, of of course, things like, I mean, reshaw brought up some really good points. I mean, the simplicity of shifting the stop sign like that is a bare minimum.

Feels great. I think four way stops are interesting, or some way of achieving a bit more parity between the Nicoll street driver and the willow street driver just tangibly slowing it down.

But I also got, like the idea of more imaginative solutions, things like a large speed table. There are things like sidewalk bump outs, repainting the crosswalks, even potentially in in a more beautiful or vibrant color.

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Really, if you know, part of this conversation has been signals, and can we really signal this intersections for pedestrians like this? This is an area where pedestrians feel comfortable and are prioritized. And can things like paint or sidewalk bump outs or bollards or speed tables both make it safer, but also signal that this area is bar none safe for pedestrians? I think bike lanes ought to be considered. Sort of, how do we think about this intersection as part of this, a broader Willow Nicoll strategy? How do we think about the investments here with, you know, investments all along a willow, I think would be important. And

then I think some of the sightline issues and sidewalk bomb belts could help with that, or ball is could help with that, just sort of extending a bit into the street so that you're not, you know, peering your head around the tree, but you can walk, you can actually walk out and as a pedestrian and feel safe.

But, yeah, those are a smattering of thoughts. But let's, let's, let's actually stop people at this intersection and stop drivers at this intersection, but also more imaginative, more demonstrative solutions that really elevate the pedestrian to make sure that everyone's safe.

**Tony Harris:** Thank you. Thank you. Alder Festa, anything you'd like to add,

**Alder Festa:** you know, Alder Smith, you know, covered a lot of, you know, some of the things I wrote down. I mean, we could put a four way stop there. I'm personally not a fan of four way stops, particularly in that area. I'm just afraid it'll cost more. There are areas that four way stops work, and there are some areas that they just don't. And I I'm not sure it would work here. You know, I would love to see a speed table, possibly there. I know there's probably challenges even with that, regarding, you know, where the sewer lines are, the gutters, etc, but I'm sure we could work around some of you know, anything having to do with drainage,

you know, another traffic light. Do we want to have a traffic light at every single intersection? It's, you know, that's not always the answer either.

You know, we have to take a closer look at maybe all of these options. Delineators, bollards, I think, will help, maybe prevent people parking to the corner. So put something that will not allow them to park there, to improve line of sight issues.

Make sure the trees are pruned properly. If that is something that also affects line of sight,

and I think that covers what

were was on my mind as far as some recommendations,

**Tony Harris:** yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And I think trimming, trimming the trees, you know, for sight line issues, and some of like brighter paint on crosswalks, some of these things, I think, will will solve some of the like, very tangible components of crossing here, and make it safer, and also contribute to elevating that culture, that this is a place for multiple types of road users, so people that walk, people that cycle, and people that drive right, right.

Peter, could we come to you for any recommendations or thoughts you might have.

**Peter Clarke:** I mean, I feel pretty similarly to what's already been said. Yeah, I don't know if the answer is a, you know, a light or a stop at this intersection for Willow drivers or some sort of speed table, but some way to have people slow down and give some easier right of way for people that are coming off of Nicoll Street, driving or walking would be very helpful in this intersection.

**Tony Harris:** Absolutely. Can I ask a question out of curiosity? I think someone mentioned speed bumps earlier, and I'm just wondering like, are those common in the area, like, is that something that you might be expecting, or is it ... I see some smiles on people's faces.

**Alder Festa:** They've been recommended. Mind you, there are 30 alders in the city of New Haven who are all requesting traffic calming measures of every design, whether it's speed humps, whether it's speed tables, etc. So they have been requested, and we'll see what happens. And that's mainly for Nicoll Street,

I'm not sure on emergency routes how that works, so we would have to check with the city engineer and director, Sam deep by sola with transportation, traffic and parking to be sure. Yeah, the only thing I would add to what Alder festa said, to her point about Nicoll is, I think specifically, there's been a fair amount of consensus around a speed bump, closer in activity,

placing one there, given that car speed, I think more mixed results. I went door knocking on Nicoll for the other side, and some residents were a little bit more ambivalent. That could be useful, could not be some some were adamant this would be great. But almost everyone had consensus that the intersection should, should get investment and potentially a speed bump over near the activity side.

**Tony Harris:** Got it. Got it. That's helpful to hear. Thank you. Okay, Rishabh, should we come to you next? Unless, if Peter, if you had anything else you wanted to add, we can always come back to you.

**Rishabh Mittal:** Yeah. So, I mean, I have some slides again, sure. So I think for for Nicoll, and I mean all the solutions that I present today can be tested using like quick build techniques, and I think slowly made permanent as they prove to be effective. So I think at Nicoll, narrowing the streets, especially at the intersection, and bringing the stop sign closer, as Smith already mentioned for better visibility, I think will help communicate traffic priority more clearly. So bringing down the traffic width with the curve to curve with for equal to 20 to 24 feet, which is narrower than Willow but could be helpful. This will improve the drivers compliance with the stop sign, and also reduce the crossing distance for everyone.

So I think that would be helpful.

I think at Willow, I think reducing vehicle speeds can help widen like the peripheral vision of the of the drivers, and make them more aware of the surroundings and giving them enough time to kind of react to unexpected events.

## **STRONG TOWNS**

This will also make them more likely to notice and yield pedestrians as they are waiting at the crosswalk. So I think for this, something like maybe narrowing the lanes at the intersection and adding like a pedestrian Island at the crosswalk could be useful.

So So there's an example at the right, some images of a quick build solution that can be implemented, and it could go with the stop sign as well. I mean, this is for the yeah for the city to the side, but yeah, I mean narrowing lanes will slow down vehicles, making them more likely to stop or yield. And this also, again, reduces the crossing distance and provides people with refuge to kind of cross the street in parts, rather than crossing the whole thing in one go.

And then lastly, I mean again, like if you start to look at the whole network and the whole area, I think like network level solutions to reduce just the overall traffic at this intersection could be interesting. So, for example, some through traffic can be rerouted to Mitchell drive, making Willow a more like neighborhood kind of access Street and at Nicoll, I think near the brewery street Plaza project could possibly be tried out.

There was a Lauren street Plaza project where Alder Caroline kind of led the project, and something similar could be tried out there as well, with support of the neighbors. And overall, I think both of these measures would kind of reduce the traffic at this intersection. And yeah, I think in long term, all of these temporary kind of solutions would be made permanent with investments, you know. So, yeah, that's, that's my ideas.

**Tony Harris:** Great. Thank you. Thank you. Yeah, and that's an interesting thought to with with a plaza project, and what you were saying that. I mean, the nice thing about trying out quick builds and temporary solutions is that they are indeed temporary, right? And if it's if it's a no go for whatever reason, tearing that down or reformatting, it can be a lot easier than if something large and permanent as built in the beginning. Yeah, yeah, excellent. Okay, any other thoughts on recommendations or potential responses to try and increase increased safety in this area?

**Alder Smith:** Two questions for Rishabh and others.

One is, I'd be curious your thoughts on Alder fesses point about four way stops, just your instinct, or your recommendation on a four way stop here, and whether or not you think that would be viable, given that there is more traffic flow on Willow and Nicoll. So curious. Your thoughts on that, and then, as well, your recommendation on the pedestrian Island. I'm just trying to looking at the pictures. I was trying to picture what a pedestrian where the pedestrian island would be in the intersection, because I think some of the pictures you showed,

they didn't, somehow, didn't click for me, exactly how that would look. And so any other texture, color you have on what that could what that could look like here. Curious about,

**Rishabh Mittal:** yeah, so I think for your first question, I would say, like, so stop signs should be accompanied with the design change. Like, I think the stop sign, in and of itself, might not work. So, I mean, like I said, for Nicoll, I think narrowing down the lanes and using curb bump outs to kind at the intersection would kind of help people to kind of abide by the stop sign.

So I think design changes are necessary, and then signs would kind of help people understand what, what they have to do.

And then second question, I think so, at at the Crosswalk, I think you So, if you see, I think there's the images where so like

Tony, can you share the cross section images for Willow street please?

**Tony Harris:** Yes, no problem.

**Rishabh Mittal:** Okay, when I go back, yeah. So, so when we are looking like eastbound, the lanes are like 15 feet wide. And then when we look westbound, there's like a parking lane. Sorry, there we are. Yeah, there's a parking lane. And then the lanes are narrower of like 11 feet, so we have an extra seven feet.

Ah. Which is on the east bound Right, right. So we have this extra seven feet, which so you can narrow down the street, and then kind of at the middle, you can have this refuge Island, which then provides, like a, like a two step crossing. So you don't because it is a high traffic Street. It is kind of intimidating to kind of cross the whole street in one go.

But I think placing a traffic island would also make the street narrower, making people like driver slower, but then also for a pedestrian like you can focus in one direction across the street and then focus on the other direction.

So yeah, I mean, there is space, and this could be done on both sides as well, because anyway, at the intersection, you're not allowed to park so, so you can have that pedestrian island in the middle.

I hope that answers your question.

**Alder Smith:** It did go ahead Alder Festa,

**Alder Festa:** I just wanted to add, is it? Is it similar to what's on Ridge Road by Davis Street? This is in Hamden, but they have little islands, right? Somewhat.

Is it similar to that type of design?

**Rishabh Mittal:** I'm not aware of that. I think that there are some of these examples. I think even in East rock neighborhood. I think sometimes, like Peter and I have gone for a walk and we have seen these islands.

I think, is it on Livingston?

Maybe, I think so. There are, I think these examples of but they are more like permanent infrastructure. I mean, you can do a permanent one, or you can also just test out. The image I shared was more like a testing

out scenario, and if it works, it could be made permanent. So Livingston and Edward street, I think that type, yeah, yeah, yeah, thank you.

**Alder Smith:** One other question Rishabh is,

can you talk about the combination of potential curb bump outs and an island? Do you see them as either or do you see those as sort of a package, in addition to stop signs and repainting? What do you think about are those? Do this? Do you think come together two separate solutions?

**Rishabh Mittal:** So, I mean, for Nicoll, I think bump out should work good because it's not a high traffic street. So I mean, you don't really need like the refuge island there. So, so that is why like for Nicoll said to have a bump out and then move the cross stop sign closer, and then the refuge Island was more for below, because it is a high traffic Street, yeah, and it's better to kind of give people a two way, kind of two stage crossing yeah, that's what we were looking for. So the Edwards, yes, okay. And like, these

three islands, right, right, right. Got it, okay, that's helpful.

**Tony Harris:** Alright, I think, I think I'm more of a visual learner than I give myself credit for, because now that I'm seeing it, it's making more sense in my head. Yeah, okay.

**Rishabh Mittal:** And this can be tried, like, using quick build. I mean, the picture you showed is like a permanent infrastructure, but we could try it with quick builds, and then, if it works, you can make it permanent.

**Tony Harris:** Yeah, absolutely. I could see even using bollards or delineators or something along those lines, just to set something up in the center, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Okay. Any further thoughts on recommendations before we, before we move to close out.

I mean, I just to, just to say, a lot of me, this is part of the closeout Tony. I'm just making sure I feel clear about the recommendations. At least, so far, we're kind of where we're sort of settling, at least for now is this idea of Rishabh, your idea of sort of narrowing Nicoll at the intersection through the use of paint, correct?

Um shifting the stop sign on Nicoll for increased visibility, and then using the model of Livingston and Edwards, potentially the addition of some sort of extended island on Willow, as well as the use of colorful paint or repainted crosswalks, in addition to the island to really signal for the driver driving down Willow that this is an area not to speed up, but to significantly slow down.

Am I missing anything? Are those the and then pruning of trees, if necessary, maybe rethinking the pedestrian signs, which I do think are a little tricky, and sort of getting away. Am I missing anything in terms of the suite of potential? Oh yes.





I mean, it could be tried. I think at Nicoll near the property, I think it's a good location,

and it's right in kind of front of the courts. People play at pickleball and stuff. And I think even the businesses would benefit from that Plaza, if it happens, and if neighbors are in agreement, I think it will kind of reduce the true traffic. So I mean, people at Nicoll might be kind of just wanting to go to Mitchell drive, and they just missed the stop sign. So I think if we just block that part out, reduce the through traffic at Nicoll. Just improve the improve the intersection.

**Tony Harris:** So yeah, absolutely, it's a lot of really, really strong options. One thing I was also thinking about too engaging, potentially representatives from that Shell station or or other neighbors, about like, what, what might be some quick or easy ways to signal. This is an intersection for multiple types of road users, right? If there's anything that might be like quick build or some other changes to the environment that might be able to happen,

Okay, well, in that case, I think we've got a pretty good summary of recommendations there. I'm going to go ahead and take us into a closing if that's all right, I'm going to share my screen one more time.

And yeah, so I really, I want to echo some some thanks to our panelists, first and foremost. So Alder Smith, Alder festa. Peter Rishabh, thank you so much for giving us your your time, your energy in reviewing all the information to you know be ready to kind of engage today. We really appreciate it. Rishabh, you and stronger Haven and Peter and you know all of our All Star kind of community volunteers, this wouldn't have been possible without you all. So thanks for getting out into the field and gathering information and working with me to put all of this information together.

I want to thank the sponsor of the crash analysis Studio project and anonymous donor, and thank the strongtown staff members who helped me out as well, and any additional community members from New Haven and from surrounding areas that have shown up tonight and during data collection. You know, we really appreciate the time and value your participation for sure.

So I did want to mention, New Haven is looking to conduct two more studio sessions this year. We're anticipating their next session will happen sometime soon, probably in the next, like two months or so. If you're interested in volunteering to help, we have a survey that Rishabh put together. You can fill it out after this recording or contact him directly at contact at stronger haven.org

and I'm actually going to share to the chat both that email address and the survey link so that just came through the chat box. The survey is pretty short and to the point,

feel free to check it out, especially if you're local and you're interested in getting involved, that would be

great. And then you'll be able to find a recording of this session and all of our crash analysis studio sessions by going to [strongtowns.org/crash](https://strongtowns.org/crash)



studio, and through our website, you can learn more about upcoming studio sessions and our Free Academy course for establishing a studio of your own. I do want to note that if you're a strong towns member or a local conversation participant, you can also submit a crash for a virtual session or talk with us further about, you know, in person events on transportation. We're open to talking about events with anybody really. So yeah, feel free to check out our site. And if you are interested in supporting strong towns, you know, and our work for safe streets, I'd ask that you please consider be.

Becoming a member. You know, I know people that contribute as little as a few dollars a year, and they get access to member only webcasts and discounts and, you know, other fun perks that we make available to our supporters. So if that's of any interest to you, feel free to check out [strongtowns.org/membership](https://strongtowns.org/membership).

If you want to learn more. Of course, we're going to keep you know, championing forward free information and events like this that are open to the public too.

So yeah, with all of that being said, on behalf of my colleagues and the panel that we've assembled this evening, thank you for watching the session of our crash analysis studio and keep doing what you can to build a strong town. Take care.

**Rishabh Mittal:** Thank you. Tony.