

## Let's polish this gem

Contributed by Cynthia Frawley  
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One of the greatest things any city can do is sell itself short &ndash; and nowhere was that more apparent than at this year's Savin Rock Festival. I know what kind of effort goes into putting on any event, but the payoff should have been much more than a handful of food stands accompanied by a mediocre craft fair and carnival rides. In total, it took my family and me about 15 minutes to stroll through the "festival" &hellip;and we were taking our time. I grew up in San Diego and watched the city's revitalization of the downtown area &ndash; a real "out with old and let's figure out how to get people here to spend their money." Since I moved to West Haven 3 1/2 years ago, nothing has made me more sad than to see the riches of our city squandered and seemingly &ndash; ignored outright. In West Haven, we have something that cities such as Milford can't touch: a long stretch of beautiful beach accompanied by a boardwalk. Why then isn't more being done to beautify the area leading to and surrounding it? What we do have is a dilapidated collection of storefronts that doesn't encourage locals to shop here &ndash; let alone any visitors. Which brings me back to the Savin Rock Festival &ndash; an utter joke.

For starters, why isn't there even a website with details about the event? I had to rely on volunteers on site, which would have been fine, had they actually given me the right information. You try telling a 3-year-old that the carnival rides weren't open after you sold them on it. Not fun. The Farmer's Market? More like a stand. The "craft fair" &ndash; I can't even call it a glorified flea market. How is it that Milford fills their town green with crafters and foodies, on a number of weekends over the course of the summer (not including the Oyster Festival)? Are our festival "organizers" even trying to reach out to the considerable family farm and craft crowd of our fine state? It doesn't look like it.

In the last three years, residents of West Haven have enjoyed higher taxes, no visible signs of development to the downtown area or the beach area. We keep giving money, but where is it going? Do city officials have any real desire to polish the gem we have in West Haven &ndash; or are they more interested in simply collecting a paycheck? I watched what happened in San Diego &ndash; the downtown became a destination &ndash; why isn't our city doing more to follow such a model? And if they aren't trying, why should they get to keep their jobs? Cynthia Frawley