

## Pedestrian Mall Feedback Side Committee Meeting - IAC - October 2nd, 2020

In Attendance: Debbie, Trevor, Joby, Duane, Grant, Nancy, Taylor

### Issues:

- Vision loss:
  - No indicators about decks on sidewalks or extending to street
  - Multiple obstacles on sidewalks
  - Lack of universal design standard
    - E.g. one deck is very different from another, so no way to learn about decks broadly through the experience as one
  - Restaurants not well-illuminated: going from extreme light to dark
    - E.g. when using a washroom
  - How does someone with low vision maintain social distancing? Identify the 6ft apart?
    - No indication to travel on one side to maintain
- Ramps have implications of dignity
  - Why have the ramp if you can't access the washroom?
    - E.g. on the second floor, way in the back, not accessible
    - Reflects lack of understanding
  - Decks were small- wheelchair users can't turn around, maneuver, or sit around the tables
- General issues with social distancing + crowd control
  - more like the regatta than a pandemic activity
  - Problems with navigating streets
  - Lack of calm areas
- No universal design around any of the pedestrian mall
  - Decks completely different
  - Ropes, rope lighting for decoration but dangerous as to where they actually are
  - Problems with safety
- Lack of assistance for people with any kinds of disability
  - Security not trained to be of useful assistance
  - Lack of safety and guidance
- Bikes at fast speeds, riding dangerously
  - Heightened safety issues with persons for disabilities
  - Other kinds of traffic caused issues
- Line-ups of different stores on sidewalks
  - Preventing people from getting back
  - No communication of line ups, numbers in stores
- Reactionary, not designed
- Standard imposed don't necessarily produce the intended outcomes
  - And no by-laws being followed
  - 'Extended event' allowed circumvention
- Problems with accessible parking
  - Appeared as separate from Mall, but actually embedded

- PDF not representative of actualities
  - No visible accessible parking spaces
- The area identified as accessible parking on a hill and had no parking spaces
- Need to drive INTO mall, like parking in a playground
- Required someone to move barriers
- No direction for individual- only verbal interaction with security guard
- Vehicles in front of the courthouse?
- Driving is very anxiety producing already, this makes it worse
- Navigating in the space
  - Few ramps appropriately designed
    - Ad hoc
    - Made out of plywood- didn't account for slip resistance
    - Not up to code
  - One ramp that looked accessible: Lack of space beyond ramp to get actually onto deck
- Emergency egress?
  - How to identify to folks with disability where emergency egress actually is and how to get there?
- A scary place to try and navigate
- Know that Ped Mall won't fix access issues on Water St., but still missed opportunity to increase access
  - Possibilities for improvement especially if IAC involved
  - Opportunity next year to have a space that works for people- human dynamic
- Saw the creation of new barriers but not the removal of old ones
  - Still lack of curb cuts
- Lack of colour consistency
  - Blue and yellow and wood and various colours
  - Needs to be consistent for wayfinding
- Few curb cuts in along the sidewalk. An accessible picnic table blocked the curb cut preventing access to the sidewalk
- Lack of bathroom signage +public bathrooms
- No indications of what changes were made
  - Trip hazards
  - Don't know what you're missing
  - It was like you took a bunch of stuff and threw it all over the place

## **Solutions:**

Application of Universal design

- Simplify Mall: no need for raised decks

Technology called

- Blind Square
- Used in Toronto, Ottawa for directional purposes
- Uses GPS to lead people through any area

- Beacon technology
  - Can be loaded by different types and layers of information
  - E.g. “in three metres is the entrance to get around the barricade”; shake your phone for more information- what’s coming up next, 3 businesses on left and what’s in front of them
  - Could include specials and menu options if working with businesses
- Charge for geosheet to enter basic info, then business can opt into with minimal charge
- IRA- some free versions
  - Connect to trained professional in wayfined that would talk to you through glasses, phone, earbuds to guide through places
  - Find washrooms, exits
  - Used in Ottawa to be geofenced (part of plan from City)

#### Adopt + Apply CSA Standards

- Addresses broad spectrum of persons with disabilities

#### Educate business community downtown

- Possibilities for training by those who are most affected
- About responsibilities of adding ramps

#### Better timelines for communication and engagement

- To inclusion stakeholders
- To broader public
- Need a discussion off the bat about what the accessibility needs actually are and how to address them
- Include Inclusion NL in consultation

#### Develop modular pieces by the city for synthesis of design

- See how ‘mall’ is total system and treat it like that
- Influence standards on the streets of design with capacity for some aesthetic flexibility
- Can take it apart and store it
  - E.g. like kitchens

#### Focus on performance and evaluation of Water St. generally

- Know what standards will be altered
- Come up with comprehensive recipe to address needs and wants
- Involve design professionals

#### Develop colour consistency for throughout mall

- Colour contrasting and cohesion

#### Have people around to ask for help who are well-marked and trained in inclusion issues

- Like at the mall or festivals

#### Have virtual town hall with business owners and City

#### Questions:

- Possibilities to spread through downtown?
  - Duckworth St felt left out/hurt by Ped Mall
  - Support small business more broadly
- What are the actual benefits of built structures? Especially if they are simply creating more barriers?

- E.g. wayfinding, lack of access once on platform
  - Could just have spread out coffee tables on streets
- What are the rules and regulations around other types of traffic in the mall?
- Would there be any option to amend by-laws or permitting processes to include accessibility requirements or, at the very least, provide information to vendors?
- Other municipalities across Canada have these. Is there potential to do a review of others so we don't try to reinvent the wheel? (especially when it comes to accessibility and inclusion issues)