

INFORMATION NOTE

Title: Downtown Pedestrian Mall Review

Date Prepared: November 4, 2020

Report To: Committee of the Whole

Councillor and Role: Councillor Shawn Skinner, Special Events

Ward: Ward 2

Issue: To provide a report on the Downtown Pedestrian Mall project and present a series of findings in support of future Mall projects.

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The Downtown Pedestrian Mall project was developed in response to, and as a means of, providing the business community expanded space from which to sell their goods and services, with the anticipated result of stimulating the downtown economy, and a means to adhere to required public health physical distancing guidelines stemming for the COVID 19 pandemic.

In short order the City of St. John's through the Special Events Regulatory Committee, worked with businesses in the downtown to develop a program and process by which to pedestrianize an area of Water St. The Mall operated from July 3 to September 7. Ancillary to the Mall were businesses in adjacent streets that took advantage of outdoor extensions. These businesses and those in the Mall footprint had the opportunity to continue their extension until November 1.

A review of the project is largely informed by an engagement process with public, businesses and several stakeholder groups. The What We Heard document was posted to the [Engage St. John's](#) site on October 22 and shared with everyone who participated and through the City's regular communications channels.

There were many recommendations arising from the Engagement sessions, Special Event Regulatory Committee feedback, as well as internal discussion - these recommendations require further discussion and evaluation prior to recommendation to Council.

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Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: The cost to deliver the Mall was \$183,933. \$120,000 was provided by federal and provincial governments, therefore the City's cost being \$63,933. The attached report identifies categories of expenditure.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: As noted in the attached report there are several stakeholder groups who will need to be consulted as the design and implementation of future Mall projects are developed and delivered, especially Downtown St. John's (BIA), Inclusion Advisory Committee, a transportation stakeholder group as well as the City's Special Events Regulatory Committee. An internal City staff Pedestrian Mall Team is proposed to guide the planning of future malls.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans: In delivering on the pedestrian mall the city is developing and delivering programs, services and public spaces that build safe, healthy and vibrant communities, as part of the strategic goal of a Connected City. Should this project be considered for 2021 it would be added to the 2021 Strategic Plan Action Plan.

It is also a means by which to facilitate and create the conditions that drive the economy by being business and industry friendly; and being a location of choice for residents, businesses and visitors, being part of the direction to be a Sustainable City.

4. Legal or Policy Implications: There are several regulatory matters that have to be addressed through developing exterior business spaces (extension of premises). These are addressed through the Special Events Regulatory Committee.
5. Privacy Implications: N/A
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations: As noted, several stakeholder groups would be consulted as part of the project development. The Mall project would also have to consider, as part the design, communication channels and mechanisms. The City's Communications Division and Downtown St. John's would need to be involved in developing and delivering on relevant communications plans.
7. Human Resource Implications: The recommended Pedestrian Mall Team of city staff and the Special Events Regulatory Committee would be involved in the planning of future Mall projects.
8. Procurement Implications: Any procurement of goods and services required in implementation would follow procurement processes
9. Information Technology Implications: Arising from the What We Heard document, was recommendation to have free Wi-Fi available in the downtown.

- 10. Other Implications:** Other Implications: Delivering on future Mall projects will reinforce the City's projects, in process, such as the lighting program and wayfinding, and supports place development.

Conclusion/Next Steps:

For staff involved in the Downtown Pedestrian Mall, next steps include using the information from the attached report, the What We Heard Document, the Continuous Improvement Yellowbelt Project and other forms of feedback, to develop a list of recommendations for Council consideration in future mall projects.

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Attachments:

Downtown Pedestrian Mall Review
What We Heard Pedestrian Mall