

INFORMATION NOTE

Title: Pedestrian Mall Accessibility Workshop

Date Prepared: May 11, 2021

Report To: Inclusion Advisory Committee

Councillor and Role: Councillor Deanne Stapleton

Ward: N/A

Issue: Increasing accessibility within the Pedestrian Mall through a learning workshop and engagement, exploring the issues of portable ramp locations, accessible washroom, accessible parking, and wayfinding.

Discussion – Background and Current Status: During the October 7th, 2020 meeting of the Inclusion Advisory Committee, concerns related to inclusion and accessibility of the summer 2020 Pedestrian Mall were discussed and are included as Appendix A. In preparation for the upcoming 2021 Pedestrian Mall, these concerns were review and changes implemented including a 2-meter barrier-free sidewalk restriction for parklets. A short summary of solutions to date is included as Appendix B. On May 10th, 2021, the Inclusion Advisory Committee and City Special Event staff held a workshop to further discuss concerns related to ramp specifications and locations, accessible washrooms, accessible parking, wayfinding and training for local businesses and security.

- **Ramps:** Extending from sidewalk to the street, maintaining a minimum ramp slope of 1/16, parallel to the sidewalk and including a landing with a turning radius of 47" squared with an additional 47" squared turning radius at the bottom as indicated in CSA Group Standards B651-18. The discussion included notes that these ramps would extend past a single parking stall and thus may need to be moved based on parklet development. Discussion included potential to consider the length of the street as curb cuts are located at the end of each sidewalk and cross walks. Also, consideration of empty buildings which may not have parklets. City employees noted vacant buildings may be rented to vendors outside the Pedestrian Mall. It was noted that it may be more feasible to exclude ramps from this year's mall, with the focus for 2022 to increase the number of curb cuts in the area.
- **Accessible washrooms:** Following an extensive search, City employees noted difficulty securing access to accessible washrooms open to the public. A short list was discussed with an option on each end of the Pedestrian Mall. It was noted that these washrooms would be available when the businesses are open which may vary throughout the summer. The City is also exploring potential locations on George Street. Locations for accessible port-a-potties was also discussed, noting lack of appropriate space for same. The group has been asked to brainstorm this issue further as

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discussion indicated it may require detailed communication for the public and further investigation for Downtown pedestrian malls in future Years.

- **Accessible parking:** The importance of parking being outside of the Pedestrian Mall to ensure safety of everyone was discussed. One suggestion was to use Adelaide Street for same, while the use of locations depicted in Appendix C was also discussed. COD-NL noted that 6% of parking in the area should be designated as accessible, recommending designating one parking area that is centrally located for accessible parking and GoBus Drop off, with an additional accessible parking space at each of the entrance to the Pedestrian Mall. A further discussion is required to secure an appropriate Go Bus drop off location.
- **Wayfinding:** The importance of appropriate way finding including methods accessible to persons with vision loss was identified. City staff are currently working with CNIB to prepare a grant application to secure funds that would allow for the Blind Square technology to be used within the mall area.
- **Training:** Increased training for security guards and business owners within the Pedestrian Mall is recommended to increase inclusion knowledge within the area. The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities have agreed to deliver free virtual training in collaboration with other members of the Advisory Committee who feel able to contribute.
- The group noted concerns with regards to bikes on the street as was noted during the October 2020 meeting. Bike's travelling at high speeds can be dangerous for all individuals. It was noted that Council has approved the use of bikes within the 2021 Pedestrian Mall with increased signage noting pedestrian right of way.

The Inclusion Advisory Committee was also advised the request to Service NL for an employee liaison to join the Ramps Up working group has been confirmed. This working group is being formed with members listed in Appendix D to explore creative solutions to the unique barriers that limit access to buildings in the downtown core.

The Advisory Committee is being asked to consider the impacts of a ramp with a slope of 1/16 or 1/20 in the area as the majority of businesses do not have the store frontage to allow for same. Where the built environment does not allow for accessible ramps with a slope of 1/20, the concept of enhanced access ramps with varying slopes will be discussed. Any solutions recommended by the Ramps Up working group (including Service NL) , would require appropriate communication to residents and visitors.

The City requires further consideration of ramp installment and locations, accessible parking and GoBus stops, accessible washrooms, wayfinding and training for the 2021 Pedestrian Mall.

- Specifically, should the City install sidewalk to street ramps within the Pedestrian Mall?

- If so, what specifications must be followed in relation to slope and location?
- Are Committee members aware of accessible washrooms in the Pedestrian Mall that have not previously been discussed?
- Is the Committee aware of accessible pot-o-potty locations in the Pedestrian Mall already discussed?
- What communication should the City provide to residents and visitors around accessible washrooms?
- What wayfinding information would the Committee like to provide to the City?
- Are any other Committee members interested in delivering inclusion training to businesses and security in the Pedestrian Mall?

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Cost of ramps
 2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: Inclusion Advisory Committee
 3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans: A connected City where people feel connected, have a sense of belonging and are actively engaged in community life.
 4. Legal or Policy Implications: N/A
 5. Privacy Implications: N/A
 6. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Communication around ramp and washroom location.
 7. Human Resource Implications: N/A
 8. Procurement Implications: Ramp procurment
 9. Information Technology Implications: N/A
 10. Other Implications: N/A
- **Conclusion/Next Steps:** IAC recommendations to staff regarding the use of ramps between curb cuts within the pedestrian mall footprint. If ramps are to be considered recommendations regarding the design specifications (including slope, landing size and orientation to curb) are required.
 - IAC recommendations to staff regarding location of accessible parking to provide access to the pedestrian mall.

- IAC recommendations to staff regarding possible options for GoBus Drop off areas to provide access to pedestrian mall.
- IAC recommendations to staff regarding accessible washrooms for pedestrian mall users including short- and long-term solutions including change management and training for downtown business owners; ramps up working group etc.
- IAC recommendations for wayfinding features including Blind Square

These recommendations will be used to increase accessibility of the Pedestrian Mall for 2021, and in future years as well as inform a comprehensive communication plan.

Prepared by/Date: Sherry Mercer, Inclusive Services Coordinator, May 11, 2021

Reviewed by/Date:

Approved by/Date: