

INFORMATION NOTE

Title:	2021 Downtown Pedestrian Mall Review
Date Prepared:	November 9, 2021
Report To:	Committee of the Whole
Councillor and Role:	Councillor Debbie Hanlon, Special Events
Ward:	Ward 2

Issue: To provide a report to Council on the 2021 Downtown Pedestrian Mall and present a series of findings from the public and business engagement process.

Discussion – Background and Current Status: The Downtown Pedestrian Mall was developed in response to, and as a means of, providing a stimulant to the downtown economy and to create space for residents to enjoy the outdoors in a safe, public health guided way in 2020.

Based on feedback from the business community and the public, plans for the 2021 Downtown Pedestrian Mall evolved, and several changes were made:

- Two sections of Duckworth Street and George Street were added to the road closure.
- Enhanced entertainment and animation were added to the Downtown Pedestrian Mall.
- Ongoing communication with the Inclusion Advisory Committee allowed for improvements in accessibility.
- Improvements were made to the parklet application process.
- Parklets were permitted from May 21 – October 31, extension of approx. 6 weeks.
- Parklets were permitted to operate until 11:00pm

The 2021 Downtown Pedestrian Mall engagement process included the public, downtown business, and other stakeholder group feedback. The What We Heard document, as well as business and public survey results are attached for review.

The public engagement process had significant participation, with 537 who responded to the quick pole on the Engage Page, 927 who responded to the online survey (up from 463 in 2020), and 73 intercept surveys completed during the event.

Some highlights of the public feedback:

- 79% visited the Downtown Pedestrian Mall three or more times.
- 85% visited the Downtown Pedestrian Mall to dine.
- 85% visited the Downtown Pedestrian Mall to walk around/check it out.

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- 61% visited the Downtown Pedestrian Mall to shop.
- 99% visited Water Street, while only 50% visited Duckworth Street.
- Parking and traffic flow was significantly impacted by the Duckworth Street closure.

The downtown business engagement process was considerably less attended. A total of 37 online surveys were completed (down from 114 in 2020), and of the five business stakeholder sessions that were offered, a total of 12 downtown businesses attended. With such minimal numbers it is difficult to offer a thorough account of the feedback, however overall, there is no agreement on what worked well for the 2021 Downtown Pedestrian Mall.

Businesses on Water Street who provided feedback were mostly positive about their experience. Feedback from those on Duckworth Street, both inside and outside the road closure, were mostly negative.

Some highlights of the downtown business feedback:

- While there were improvements noted in the permit application process, there were still points of confusion/lack of clarity in some areas.
- 57% of those who completed the survey said the Downtown Pedestrian Mall brought new customer to their business.
- 48% said their overall viability improved during the pandemic.
- 47% said their business experienced a decline in customers.

An engagement session with the Inclusion Advisory Committee was held, and although there are still many barriers to overcome, many improvements were noted for the 2021 Downtown Pedestrian Mall.

Some highlights of the Inclusion Advisory Committee feedback:

- Generally pleased with the planning process and involvement of Inclusion Advisory Committee early in process.
- Positive feedback from GoBus users and drivers.
- Barrier free two-meter corridor worked well but had some issues.
- Lack of public, accessible washrooms is a concern.
- Lack of curb cuts is an issue.
- If decks are accessible, the seating on the decks should be accessible as well.

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 a recommendation to Council.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications: \$200,000 was budgeted for the Water Street portion of the 2021 Downtown Pedestrian Mall. The addition of the Duckworth Street added an extra \$167,000. \$50,000 capital was also allocated.
Grant contributions were received from the Government of NL and ACOA at \$60,000 each, for a total contribution of \$120,000. Total City investment was \$251,000.
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: Several stakeholder groups who will 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.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans: In delivering on the Downtown 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. 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: N/A
5. Privacy Implications: N/A
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations: Staff will continue to engage with the public, downtown businesses, and stakeholder groups as part of the project development. The City's Communications Division and Downtown St. John's will need to be involved in developing and delivering on relevant communications plans.
7. Human Resource Implications: N/A
8. Procurement Implications: N/A
9. Information Technology Implications: N/A
10. Other Implications: N/A

Conclusion/Next Steps: Utilize the information from the What We Heard Document and other forms of feedback to develop a list of recommendations for Council consideration for the 2022 Downtown Pedestrian Mall.

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Approved by:

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2021 Downtown Pedestrian Mall Review.docx
Attachments:	- WWH DPM Oct 2021.pdf - 2021 DPM PUBLIC Survey Results.pdf - 2021 DPM BUSINESS Survey Results.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 10, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

No Signature - Task assigned to Jennifer Langmead was completed by workflow administrator Karen Chafe

Jennifer Langmead - Nov 10, 2021 - 9:39 AM

Tanya Haywood - Nov 10, 2021 - 10:04 AM