

From: **"Mochrie, Paul"** <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>

To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**

Date: 12/3/2021 4:50:09 PM

Subject: **Drinking in Public Plazas – 2021 Pilot Update**

Attachments: **Memo - Drinking in Public Plazas – 2021 Pilot Update.pdf**

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Lon LaClaire regarding the 2021 Drinking in Public Plazas Pilot. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- ☐ This second-phase pilot enabled staff to test new partnerships and sites, conduct deeper engagement, refine approaches, implement a longer program, and continue to support business and safe social gathering
- ☐ Pilot locations included one returning site from 2020 (Cambie & 17th) and five new locations (Maple & 4th, Granville & 13th, Granville & 14th, Fraser & 27th, and 800 Robson Plaza)
- ☐ Feedback was collected from the public, businesses, and plaza steward partners, and was very positive overall
- ☐ VPD calls for service did not increase at pilot sites (with the exception of 800 Robson) and VCH Emergency Department data showed no significant changes
- ☐ Staff are continuing to work through findings and share learnings with Park Board staff to inform future policy and initiatives to support drinking in select public spaces

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lon LaClaire at 604-873-7336 or lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

December 3, 2021

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office

FROM: Lon LaClaire
General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Drinking in Public Plazas – 2021 Pilot Update

This memo outlines the findings of the 2021 Drinking in Public Plazas Pilot. This second-phase pilot has built on the success and learnings of the 2020 pilot, allowing staff to further refine approaches and collect data in both reactivated and new locations.

Background

On June 23, 2020, Council directed staff to develop a pilot project to allow for public consumption of alcohol in designated public spaces. The goal of this motion was to support businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the food service industry, and to provide additional opportunities for people to gather and socialize safely in public spaces. The Council-approved 2020 pilot ran from August 10, 2020 to October 12, 2020.

On February 4, 2021, Council approved a related alcohol consumption pilot at the Drinkers Lounge temporary parklet (111 Princess Ave). This pilot, which supports a broader community harm reduction initiative and provides a safe outdoor space for drinkers, opened on March 1, 2021.

On March 30, 2021, Council directed staff to consider reactivating the Drinking in Public Plazas Pilot for a second summer season, and to explore new locations. Council approved the 2021 pilot and the first three sites on May 18, 2021, and an additional three sites on June 29, 2021. The pilot ran until October 11, 2021.

Building on learnings from the first pilot, the goals of the second-phase pilot were to:

- Test new partnerships and new plazas (identified via an expression of interest process);
- Conduct deeper engagement with stakeholders and partners;
- Refine location criteria, management plans and monitoring approaches;
- Allow for public engagement and data collection over a longer time period; and
- Continue to support local business recovery and safe spaces for social gathering.

2021 Pilot Summary and Preliminary Learnings

The second phase pilot locations included one returning site from 2020 (Cambie and 17th pop-up plaza), and five new locations: Maple & 4th, Granville & 13th, Granville & 14th, Fraser & 27th, and 800 Robson Plaza. This second phase offered learnings from a wider range of locations and partnerships, including a pop-up plaza (Fraser & 27th) stewarded by a restaurant business, rather than a BIA or non-profit organization, and the newly re-opened downtown civic plaza (800 Robson).

The program's monitoring plan included regular communication between staff and plaza partners, an online public survey (open from July 21 to October 11), on-site observation by staff, a review of 3-1-1 reports and emails, and regular communication and data from Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and Vancouver Police Department (VPD). Key findings from this feedback are:

- Public feedback indicated high levels of support for allowing drinking in public plazas;
- Nearly all public survey respondents felt that their sense of safety and/or welcomeness in the pilot plazas improved or remained the same when visiting during the pilot;
- The pilot was well-received by nearby businesses and seen to have positive impacts;
- Feedback from plaza steward partners was very positive overall and interest in participating in a future program is high;
- During on-site observation, people were drinking quietly and no safety or nuisance issues were observed;
- Some commonly cited challenges from partners were: providing public access to washrooms, daily management of temporary public washrooms (installed at 3 sites), and increased waste;
- At one location (800 Robson), stakeholders raised concerns about ensuring that alcohol consumption is compatible with adjacent uses/tenancies, and related concerns about safety and nuisance issues;
- VCH Emergency Department visit data shows no significant changes in alcohol-related ED visits during the pilot as compared to non-pilot periods (this analysis does not account for the long-term impacts of alcohol consumption)
- VPD calls for service at pilot sites do not show notable increases over 2019 and 2020 (with the exception of 800 Robson, where calls increased for the Robson Square complex as a whole, with no evidence of connection to the pilot); and

- Over both pilot seasons, VPD reported no concerns with safety or nuisance issues in the designated sites, and did not report any safety or nuisance issues outside of the designated sites caused by or related to the pilot.

Next Steps

Staff are continuing to work through the findings from the 2020 and 2021 pilots, including the management approach for the City and plaza partners. In addition, staff are sharing learnings with Park Board, which ran a parallel pilot for alcohol consumption in parks. This work can help inform future policy and initiatives to support drinking in select public spaces.

A report seeking approval for an extension to the Drinkers Lounge Alcohol Consumption Pilot is expected to be brought forward to Council on December 8.

If you have any questions regarding the 2021 Alcohol Consumption in Public Plazas Pilot, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lon LaClaire', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Lon LaClaire, M.Eng., P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering Services

604.873.7336 | lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca