

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

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

Date: 10/3/2022 5:29:30 PM

Subject: CM: Council Memo - RTS 14598 and 13319 - Prioritizing Commercial Drive as a Pedestrian-First High Street

Attachments: ENG - Council Memo - RTS 14558 13319 - Prioritizing Commercial Drive as a Pedestrian-First High Street.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached Council memo from Lon LaClaire regarding Prioritizing Commercial Drive as a Pedestrian-First High Street. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- ☐ Sidewalk widening south of first at bus stops;
- ☐ Street furniture upgrades along the corridor; and
- ☐ Installation of over 20 patios along the corridor and working with the BIA and community to explore opportunities for programming and public space.

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)
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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

October 3, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Lon LaClaire
General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Update on 'Prioritizing Commercial Drive as a Pedestrian-First High Street' and 'Celebrating Italian Culture: Welcome Signage in Little Italy and a Pilot Program for an Italian Piazza in Vancouver' Motions

RTS #: 14558 & 13319

This memo provides an update on actions in support of two Council motions: 'Prioritizing Commercial Drive as a Pedestrian-First high street' passed on May 27, 2021, and 'Celebrating Italian Culture: Welcome Signage in Little Italy and a Pilot Program for an Italian Piazza in Vancouver' passed on June 26, 2019. Staff provided updates to Council previously on these motions on June 3, 2021 (Piazza) and [June 18, 2021](#) (Pedestrian-First High Street).

Staff have been working with the Commercial Drive Business Society (CDBS) on a number of quick start actions to advance the pedestrian-first high street motion, and are in continued discussions with the CDBS on next steps for the piazza. This work is supported through a variety of city programs funded within the current and 2023-2026 capital plans.

Prioritizing Commercial Drive as a Pedestrian-first high street: Quick Start Actions

- **Removal of northbound rush regulations, E 1st Ave to Venables**
Transportation has removed the northbound rush regulations during the morning peak period (7:00am to 9:30am) on Commercial Dr between E 1st Ave to Venables St since the initial COVID-19 Public Life Recovery efforts in summer 2020. This has allowed for the curb lane and on-street parking to be used for temporary summer patios and additional loading and parking during the morning peak period. Staff are continuing to

work with TransLink to monitor the impacts to transit, but there are no current plans to reinstate these.

- **Sidewalk widening at bus stops (e.g. bus bulbs) on Commercial Dr south of 1st Ave**

Staff are planning to widen the sidewalks at several bus stops on Commercial Drive south of 1st Ave. Bus bulbs improve bus travel time and reliability by reducing delays from entering and exiting a bus stop, and also improve comfort for people riding and waiting for a bus. These bus bulbs will achieve multiple Council objectives. First, widened sidewalks near bus stops will create more space for walking, queuing and seating, thereby supporting a more pedestrian-oriented high street. Second, bus bulges will also help create a more consistent road geometry south of E 1st Ave and provide a more unified experience between the north and south sections of this important retail high street. Finally, bus bulges will improve transit on one of the busiest bus routes in the City. These improvements for both pedestrian experience and transit reliability will help advance the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The bus bulbs, along with minor changes to the Commercial Dr & E 1st Ave intersection to improve bus and traffic flow, are expected to be primarily funded from TransLink's Bus Speed and Reliability cost-sharing program. As a quick start action, the bus bulbs are planned to be installed using interim materials in early 2023.

Staff are also working with the CDBS and local businesses to explore a second phase of bus bulbs and other bus-priority improvements north of E 1st Ave, currently targeted for spring 2024, after evaluating this phase south of E 1st Ave.

- **Patios and other street uses**

Staff continue to support street uses that help enliven this retail high street through the existing Patio, Merchandise Display and Public Bike Share programs. In addition to the many existing year-round sidewalk patios that help make Commercial Drive a destination street, the 2022 summer patio program supported over 20 temporary curbside patios on this street. Future street changes could increase this number in upcoming summers.

- **Street Furniture upgrades**

A great pedestrian high street requires a suite of street furniture to support public life. Staff are working with the CDBS to upgrade and add new street furniture along Commercial Drive. This includes new garbage cans, new benches and new bike racks. The goal is to provide this street furniture in a consistent aesthetic to create a unified look. This work will be funded within existing city program budgets, as well as through the City's street furniture contract. Initial roll out will begin in Fall 2022 and continue throughout 2023.

Italian Piazza update

Council directed staff to explore the creation of a "piazza" - an age-friendly outdoor space that could support community events and Italian cultural expression, and where people could enjoy beer, wine and appetizers. In addition, Council asked staff to engage the Host Nations and urban indigenous communities.

During the summer of 2021, staff partnered with the CDBS, Italian Day Festival Society and local business Sopra Sotto Pizzeria to test a seasonal pop-up piazza on Grant St at Commercial Drive. Through the pilot, staff heard strong interest from the community for additional plaza space, but not in this location. In addition, the CDBS communicated that the stewardship demands of the piazza were significant.

In parallel, staff also piloted drinking in public plazas and developed the Alcohol Consumption in Public Plazas Policy, which was approved by Council in March 2022. Although this policy enables drinking in public plazas, it does not enable table service as described in the Council motion. Allowing this would require regulatory changes from the Province.

Staff will continue to engage the CDBS on next steps for a piazza, in particular exploring other potential locations of interest. Currently, Engineering, Parks and Planning staff are participating in these discussions about where there may be opportunities. In addition, staff will update the other stakeholders identified in the memo on the progress of the work.

Next steps

Over the coming months, staff will continue to work with businesses, the CDBS, and other area stakeholders to implement quick start actions that support the vision to prioritize Commercial Drive as a pedestrian-first high street. These quick-start actions will help inform larger street improvement projects in the future. Staff will also continue discussions with the CDBS and other stakeholders to explore potential locations for a piazza.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.



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General Manager, Engineering Services

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