

From: **"Mochrie, Paul"**

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

Date: 2024-04-11 12:02:15 PM

Subject: Supporting Businesses during the Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot

Attachments: Memo - Supporting Businesses during the Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot.pdf

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Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Lon LaClaire. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- In response to Council direction and stakeholder engagement, staff are finding innovative ways to support businesses in the Water Street Pilot.
- To support retail businesses, staff will bring a report to Council recommending by-law amendments to waive fees for small patios and merchandise displays.
- To support restaurants, staff are enabling new and expanded patios, and are working with Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch to facilitate temporary licensing. Patio fees will be pro-rated for the pilot period.
- Staff are exploring guideline relaxations to enable additional business-led activations, including live music, experimental marketing, tourism kiosks and events.

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

Best,  
Paul

**Paul Mochrie** (he/him)  
City Manager  
City of Vancouver



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwə́wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

## MEMORANDUM

April 10, 2024

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager  
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk  
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC  
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office  
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Lon LaClaire  
General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Supporting Businesses during the Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot

RTS #: N/A

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This memo provides an update on how staff plan to expand local businesses support during the Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot ("Water Street Pilot") beyond standard programs, including waiving fees and relaxing program guidelines for several street use programs on a trial basis.

### Background

In February 2024, Council directed staff to proceed with the Water Street Pilot to trial a pedestrian-first Water Street and help inform the Gastown Public Spaces Plan. In response to engagement with local businesses and concerns expressed by the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS) about potential impacts of the closure of the street to vehicles, staff identified a benefit of taking a flexible approach to enabling businesses to easily and creatively use the additional street space during the pilot. Business-led activations can both contribute to a vibrant, successful public realm and bring additional benefits for the businesses.

### Work to Date and Next Steps

Water Street's types of businesses are diverse. To support the broad spectrum of businesses and facilitate their participation in the pilot, staff are planning for varied opportunities to support different business types.

To support businesses in the pilot area, staff plan to bring a report to Council in May 2024, which will recommend by-law changes to temporarily waive application and permit fees for small sidewalk patios (tables and chairs placed along the building's frontage, with no railings and no service or consumption of liquor) and merchandise display units in the Water Street Pilot area.

This recommendation responds to feedback staff have received during engagement, where businesses have expressed that the nature of a pedestrian-first initiative generally benefits larger food and hospitality businesses, while providing comparatively little benefit to smaller food establishments and retailers. By temporarily waiving fees for small sidewalk patios and merchandise displays, the goal is to incentivize more businesses to take part in the animation of street.

To further support food and hospitality businesses, staff are enabling these businesses to take advantage of the additional street space during the pilot with new and/or enlarged patios. Specifically, staff are:

- Collaborating with the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Branch (LCRB) to facilitate and expedite temporary licensing of these patio spaces;
- Enabling existing business occupancy to shift 100 per cent to outdoor patio spaces for the duration of the pilot (should they choose to do so); and
- Producing drawings of patio footprints to support businesses' permit and licensing applications – a task that traditionally fell to the applicants to do themselves.

To meet safety and fire access guidelines, staff are ensuring physical separation between patio footprints in areas of the pilot where there are multiple patios being coordinated. Large patio permit fees will also be pro-rated so that businesses are only paying for the two-month pilot period. At the time of this memo, staff currently estimate that there will be about 20 applications for new and/or expanded large and curbside patios, 13 for small patios, and 11 for merchandise displays during the pilot.

In parallel with these applications, staff are working with businesses to explore other, innovative uses in street space which are not currently accommodated in the City's existing street use programs. For example, Destination Vancouver, in partnership with the GBIS, has proposed to set up one or more information booths in the pilot area. Staff are exploring relaxations to program guidelines to enable these uses on a trial basis during the pilot. In addition, staff plan on introducing a low-complexity event zone permit for the duration of the pilot, which will further streamline application process, as well as enable more creative commercial activations on the street. This includes supporting businesses to have live music, set up lounge areas or host small performances.

Staff will also continue to work with the GBIS and other event organizers to support summer events including larger events such as "The Gastown Grand Prix" and "Meet Me in Gastown". Additionally, staff will be promoting the low-complexity event permit with businesses, community organizations and placemakers to encourage small-scale events and activations during the pilot.

Learnings from the temporary by-law amendments and relaxed program guidelines will help to inform potential approaches for future pedestrian zone pilots and will also be used for future updates to the City's street use programs.

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



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

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