

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

To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

Date: 10/24/2024 8:44:36 AM

Subject: Upcoming news release: Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot (October 24, 2024)

Dear Mayor and Council,

Following your approval at yesterday's Council meeting, I am writing to inform you that the City will be issuing the below news release regarding the Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x'm k'y'm (Musqueam), S'wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and s'lilw'ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

City of Vancouver
News Release
October 24, 2024

Council approves weekend-only summer 2025 Water Street Pedestrian Zone pilot with key enhancements

Yesterday, Council approved the return of the Water Street Pedestrian Zone pilot in summer 2025 on weekends and for special events, including key enhancements based on community and local business feedback.

The Water Street Pedestrian Zone pilot is part of the City's ongoing efforts to enhance public spaces, promote local business and create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere in Gastown.

"Council is pleased to move forward with a revised approach for the Water Street Pedestrian Zone pilot in 2025," says Mayor Ken Sim. "Based on feedback we received this summer, we are going to make some key adjustments next year, including a weekend-only approach and two-waying Cordova Street. We are committed to making Water Street a vibrant and successful space for local businesses, residents and visitors and our continued learnings will help shape the long-term vision for Water Street."

The 2025 Water Street Pedestrian Zone pilot will include:

- **Weekends and special events only:** The pedestrian zone pilot will operate on weekends (Saturday and Sunday) and for special events.
- **Improved neighbourhood access:** During the pilot, the City will trial a two-way street design on Cordova St between Gore and Richards Streets to improve access for residents, service providers and visitors. Additionally, tour bus stops will be relocated to Cordova St, and the City will work with businesses to create an enhanced pedestrian experience on Water St that supports weekday and weekend uses.
- **Community safety and cleanliness:** Enhanced street cleaning services will continue, and as part of a broader initiative to add washrooms in the Downtown Eastside, the City will explore installing a permanent public washroom on Water St. The City will also work with the new Gastown Community Policing Centre to develop a coordinated safety approach.

Staff will report back to Council before the end of 2024 with further details on the feasibility, business opportunities and roll-out of the 2025 pilot, including considerations for the two-way street design of Cordova St.

In preparation for the 2025 pedestrian zone, the City will continue collaborating with local businesses, the Gastown Business Improvement Society and community organizations, and partnering with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to explore further improvements to make the 2025 pilot a success. The City's commitment to reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) will remain central, with efforts to increase the visibility of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations through art installations and community storytelling.

About the Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot

In spring 2023, Council directed staff to develop a Public Spaces Plan to guide investments and planning for the future of public spaces in Gastown and explore pedestrianizing Water Street either seasonally or year-round to support vibrant public life. The 2024 Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot ran July through August, included car-free and car-light sections, and prioritized walking, local businesses, culture, community-building, biking and rolling.

By prioritizing pedestrian-first initiatives, the City aims to create more vibrant and inclusive urban environments that support local businesses, enhance safety, and foster community engagement.

Key findings from our survey respondents include:

- 84 per cent of people had a positive experience visiting the Water Street Pedestrian Zone and are interested in the pedestrian zone returning in future summers.
- 59 per cent of businesses are interested in the pedestrian zone returning in future summers, with a strong split between those who support and those who don't.
- 74 per cent of participating businesses found the new permitting changes valuable.

More detailed learnings about the public and business experience of the pilot can be found in the appendices of the Council report. [Read the Council report.](#) Amendments are below.

Residents and businesses are encouraged to stay informed about upcoming activations and community engagement opportunities by visiting vancouver.ca/gastown

Please see amended motion below. This is a draft copy provided for your understanding. The published minutes are the official record of the meeting.

THAT Council direct staff to proceed with an interim two-way street design on Cordova Street from Richards Street to Gore Avenue to improve access for visitors, residents and service providers, and test the implications for motor vehicles and transit getting to and from Gastown and on surrounding streets;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff report back to Council to affirm that the above changes to a two-way Cordova can be in place and be operational prior to commencing with a summer 2025 Water Street Pedestrian Zone;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to report back on options for a multi-modal Water St which creates better walking and cycling connections between Richards St, Portside Greenway and Carrall St, while retaining local access - but not arterial - motor vehicle traffic.

FURTHER THAT the summer Pedestrian Zone be in effect on weekends (Saturdays, Sundays and for special events) including key enhancements as outlined in this report;

AND FURTHER THAT Council affirms its commitment to continuing to invest in and support the Gastown neighbourhood, including completion of an expert public-space design consultant led and guided Gastown Public Spaces Plan that includes a concept design for Water Street and Maple Tree Square that allows for flexibility into the future, as outlined in this report.

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Media contact:

Civic Engagement and Communications

media@vancouver.ca