

From: "Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>
To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council"](#)
Date: 5/23/2025 11:43:18 AM
Subject: Upcoming News release: Sundays are for strolling on Water Street this summer (May 23, 2025)

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to inform you that the City will be issuing the below news release today (May 23) regarding the testing of public space and transportation changes in Gastown this summer.

The news release stems from Council's February 2025 endorsement of a plan developed in collaboration with the Gastown Businesses Improvement Society to test placemaking features, two-waying Cordova and a Sunday pedestrian zone. In addition to the news release, we have the following comms planned to support this release:

- Lisa Parker, Director of Public Space and Street Use, offering media availability for media interviews
- Driver and pedestrian signage along Cordova Street identifying the location of the two-way traffic pattern change
- Social media posts
- An updated Gastown web page ([Vancouver.ca/gastown](https://vancouver.ca/gastown))

Please keep this news release embargoed until it goes live from the City media email accounts.

Maria will reply to this email with the relevant Vancouver.ca link and social media links, once these are live.

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 x m k y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

City of Vancouver
News release
May 23, 2025

Sundays are for strolling on Water Street this summer

Cordova two-way traffic starts Sunday ahead of pedestrian-zone Sundays

The City of Vancouver is supporting another summer of excitement in Gastown by testing public space and transportation changes that will help shape future upgrades and programming in the neighbourhood.

It all begins Sunday, May 25 when the City starts piloting [two-way traffic on Cordova Street](#) – from Gore Avenue to Richards Street – ahead of [car-free Sundays](#) on Water Street this summer. The change to two-way circulation is expected to improve vehicle access for Gastown area residents, visitors and service providers and support smoother traffic movement to downtown on Sundays throughout the summer. As these changes take effect, we encourage everyone to be patient and observant while adjusting to the new traffic patterns.

Be advised that Cordova Street will be fully closed from Richards to Gore from 8pm to 4 am Saturday for crews to finalize work ahead of the two-way change starting.

These actions are part of a broader set of Council-directed initiatives developed in close collaboration with the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS). The goal is to enhance Gastown's public spaces, support local businesses, and create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere through testing key improvements such as:

- Weekly Sunday Water Street pedestrian zone: Starting June 15, Water Street will be car-free on Sundays from 10 am – 6 pm, between Richards and Columbia streets, to August 31. The Sunday pedestrian zone will explore different levels of programming, ranging from bigger city-wide events to days with a more organic community focus. The City is working with the GBIS and local organizations to create a welcoming, family-friendly experience on Pedestrian Zone Sundays. A free bike valet will also be available on Sundays.
- Public space enhancements: To make Water Street more vibrant — even when traffic is flowing — the City will add seating and other placemaking features at key spots to enhance the experience for everyone, every day. All summer long, Water Street will feature:
 - A mix of seating options
 - Wider sidewalks in some locations to make more space for pedestrians
 - Placemaking elements at the east and west entrances, Maple Tree Square, and at key points along Water Street
 - Storytelling and cultural elements from Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations
 - An eastbound painted bicycle lane from Richards Street to Alexander Street, with a westbound shared lane
- Business support tools: To support local businesses in the pilot area, a refined set of tools and services will be offered including:
 - New and expanded patio footprints where possible, and more flexible patio design guidelines
 - Waived fees for all summer patios in an expanded project area
 - Streamlined permitting and support for temporary licensing with the Liquor and Cannabis Regulation Board (LCRB)
 - Open Streets permitting to allow for shared market stalls, merchandise displays with point of sale, and live music adjacent to patios
- Community safety and cleanliness: Enhanced street-cleaning services will continue and the City will work with the new Gastown Community Policing Centre to develop a coordinated

- safety approach.

This summer's activities and two-way Cordova Street trial will inform ongoing work on [Gastown Public Spaces Plan](#) which will guide long-term investments in the area.

"I'm thrilled to see Gastown come alive again this summer, especially on Sundays when Water Street turns into a vibrant, pedestrian-only space," says Mayor Ken Sim. "This is another big step in our commitment to revitalizing this iconic neighbourhood, and I can't wait to see everyone out enjoying it."

The City will continue collaborating with the GBIS, local businesses and community organizations, and partner with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations as we learn from this pilot for future work in the area. 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.

"By championing pedestrian-first initiatives and collaborating with local businesses, we're working to create a lively, safe, and inclusive Gastown," says Lisa Parker, Director of Public Space and Street Use. "Together, we are working to transform Water Street into a bustling pedestrian destination and in 2025, our collective vision endeavours to foster community, culture, and commerce in the heart of our city."

About the Water Street Pedestrian Zone Pilot

In spring 2023, Council directed staff to develop a Public Spaces Plan and explore seasonal or year-round pedestrianization of Water Street. A pilot ran in summer 2024, featuring car-free and car-light zones that prioritized walking, cycling, local businesses and community life. In February 2025, Council endorsed a plan, developed in collaboration with the GBIS, which will test placemaking features, two-way Cordova, and a Sunday 10am – 6pm pedestrian zone.

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

