

From: ["van Dyk, Donny"](#)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 1/9/2026 12:52:03 PM

Subject: Memo - Gastown Pilot 2025 Learnings

Attachments: Memo - Gastown Pilot 2025 Learnings.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

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

- This memo provides an overview of learnings from the summer 2025 Gastown Pilot, which included the implementation of two-way Cordova St, public space enhancements on Water St and Pedestrian Zone Sundays.
- This is the second year of piloting public realm improvements in the neighbourhood as a means to inform the Gastown Public Spaces Plan and future investment in the neighbourhood.
- Key learnings show a generally positive reception of the 2025 Pilot, with some opportunities to improve and address challenges in the future.
- In early 2026, staff will bring a plan to Council to guide and inform investment over the coming years based on learnings from both summer pilots, public engagement, ongoing partnerships with the local Nations, and initial planning and design work led by the consultant team in collaboration with the Gastown Business Improvement Society.

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

Thanks,
Donny

Donny van Dyk (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver



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-Wautl)ions.

MEMORANDUM

January 8, 2026

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Donny van Dyk, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief of External Relations
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: Gastown Pilot - 2025 Learnings

RTS #: 17660

This memo provides an overview of learnings from the summer 2025 Gastown pilot. This is the second year of piloting public realm improvements in the neighbourhood as a means to inform the Gastown Public Spaces Plan and future investment in the neighbourhood. The 2025 pilot approach was approved by Council in [February 2025](#) and included: the implementation of two-way Cordova St, public space enhancements on Water St and Pedestrian Zone Sundays (see Appendix A). This work, along with a comprehensive data collection and monitoring plan (see Appendix B), was developed in collaboration with the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS) and the Gastown Public Spaces consultant team. Learnings from the 2025 pilot are summarized below (see Appendix C for an overview of key findings from different data sources). A more comprehensive summary of data findings will be shared on the project website.

Learnings from the 2025 pilot

1. Two-way Cordova St supported overall network changes. The two-way design for Cordova St, with supporting network changes, successfully lowered vehicle volumes on Water St this summer without overwhelming the overall network; however, there were some impacts on eastbound travel times, affecting both transit and private vehicles. Additional mitigation and adjustments are being tested to reduce these impacts. The pilot of two-way Cordova St was extended over the winter to allow for continued learning.

2. New seating and placemaking features were well-received, and there is a desire for more comfortable public spaces in Gastown. Both the public and business surveys showed strong support for the new placemaking enhancements along Water St and in Maple Tree

Square. The public felt that Water St was a comfortable place to spend time outdoors and want to see more pedestrian-oriented spaces to spend time in the area. The majority of businesses had a positive day-to-day experience with the narrowed roadway and reduced vehicle volumes this summer but noted a continued need to increase visitor comfort and neighbourhood appeal through consistent, dedicated resources for maintenance and upkeep.

3. The Sunday Pedestrian Zone Days created a draw, but 2025's "event-style" approach to programming was resource-intensive. The full-length closures of Water St on Sundays were rated highly by the public and businesses, and both pedestrian and cycling counts were higher from 10am to 6pm on Sundays compared to other days and times of the week. Comparatively, the Monday to Saturday experience received somewhat less public support. Both the public and businesses noted a desire for extended car-free hours and more events & activations, however there are significant resourcing trade-offs to consider with an events-based approach to programming and activation of Pedestrian Zones. The 2025 approach to road closures relied on extensive on-site support from VPD, which is challenging to sustain long-term.

4. The 2025 pilot received stronger support from businesses compared to summer 2024. More businesses would like to see the Pedestrian Zone return, and potentially expand, compared to 2024. Businesses reported improvements in perceptions of safety and comfort throughout the neighbourhood during Pedestrian Zone programming and when VPD presence was visible. There was also strong business support for the new public seating areas and Sunday programming in general, and a notable increase in the number of businesses who participated in the pilot in some way compared to 2024, suggesting the overall impacts were well-received.

5. Gastown businesses had a stronger economic year in 2025 compared to 2024, although businesses did slightly less well during the pilot months than in 2024. Like their counterparts Downtown, Gastown's 2025 sales performance remains lower than in 2023 but overall has been higher than in 2024. In particular, Gastown outperformed its 2024 sales volumes in the first half of 2025, which is likely due to the challenges businesses faced during construction in Maple Tree Square in 2024. However, during the pilot period in 2025, Gastown businesses did less well in comparison to businesses Downtown. Their sales performance was slightly weaker during the 2025 pilot period compared to summer 2024 when they outperformed Downtown businesses. This seems to align with the data on pedestrian and cycling volumes, which shows lower numbers of people visiting Gastown than in summer 2024, with increases seen predominantly on Sundays between 10am and 6pm. It is important to note that these local economic trends are assessed through Moneris data, which is not used by all businesses in Gastown nor Downtown and thus may not capture all businesses' experience. However, it is a standard reference for retail activity at the neighbourhood scale, and consistent with the data sources used in 2024, allowing for year-over-year comparisons.

6. Marketing efforts and awareness about the pilot have improved compared to 2024, and have more room to grow. Learnings from the 2024 pilot identified a need for more positive messaging about Gastown and increased awareness about the pilot through collaborative marketing effort and strategic partnerships. The percentage of people who are coming to the neighbourhood specifically for the Pedestrian Zone (or Water St enhancements) is higher than 2024, suggesting marketing and promotional efforts are working. However, businesses noted a need for continued increase in clarity and awareness.

7. Cycling infrastructure boosted usage on Water St, but there is room to improve comfort, safety, and legibility. On Water St, cycling volumes in 2025 are higher than 2023 baseline volumes overall, after the installation of the new eastbound counterflow bike lane.

Compared to 2024, westbound cycling volumes decreased on Water St but increased on Cordova St after the implementation of the two-way roadway design. Feedback from both the public and businesses highlighted some legibility and perceived safety concerns. Data and field observations showed that many people rode the wrong way in the eastbound bike lane, particularly on the 300-block, where vehicle congestion and queuing was highest. This suggests many people cycling do not feel comfortable cycling without protection from motor vehicle traffic when there are higher than AAA (all ages and abilities) vehicle volumes.

Based on early learnings and the support of the GBIS, components of the 2025 pilot were extended over the winter months for continued learning and monitoring and will be in place through to summer 2026. This includes two-way Cordova St from Richards St to Gore Ave and associated changes on Water St and Powell St; the cycling connection on Water St; and, the planters and placemaking elements along Water St, Maple Tree Square, and at the west and east gateways.

Next steps

In Spring 2026, staff will bring a plan to Council to guide and inform investment over the coming years based on the extensive learnings from both summer pilots, public engagement, ongoing partnerships with the local Nations, and initial planning and design work led by the consultant team in collaboration with the GBIS. The plan will outline a vision and principles to guide work in the neighbourhood, emerging design directions, priorities for investment, and an approach for future summer pedestrian zones.

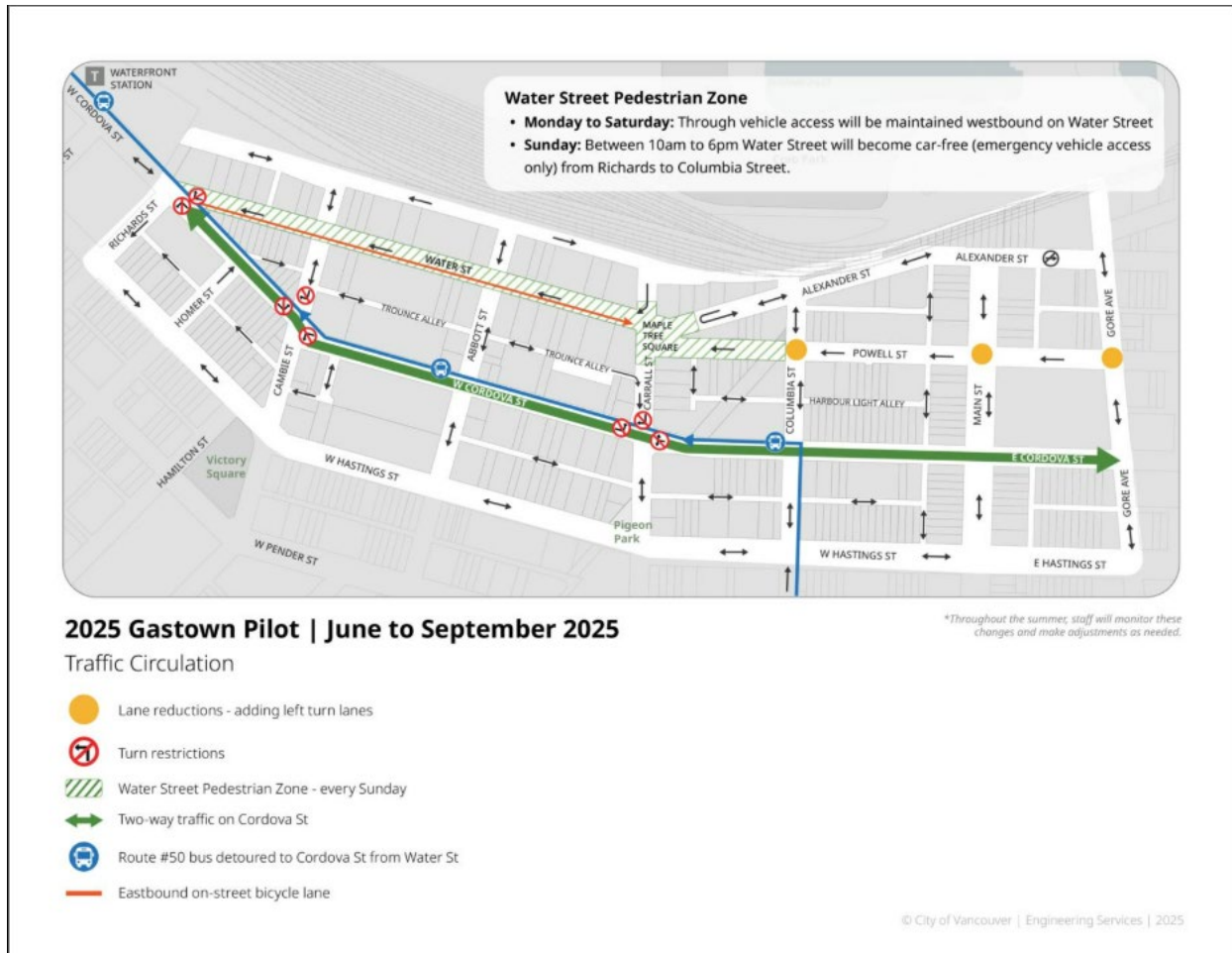
Please contact me directly if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lon LaClaire', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

604.873.7336 | lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca

Appendix A. 2025 Gastown pilot overview



Following [preliminary direction](#) to proceed with a summer 2025 pilot, in February 2025, Council approved a refined approach for the 2025 Gastown Pilot, developed in collaboration with the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS) and supported by the Gastown Public Spaces Plan’s design and placemaking consultant team. This included testing three key moves:

- **Public space enhancements and placemaking features on Water St**, including:
 - Expanding public realm and reducing vehicle volumes, while maintaining through-traffic on Water St
 - Installing placemaking elements at the west gateway (Richards St) and east gateway (Powell St at Columbia St)
 - Adding seating and placemaking features in Maple Tree Square
 - Partnering with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to increase their visibility through storytelling and art installations
 - Adding a counterflow, eastbound-only bike lane on Water St while westbound bikes remained in mixed traffic
- **Two-way Cordova Street**, from Richards St to Gore Ave, including:
 - Moving the #50 bus (westbound direction to False Creek/Granville Island) to Cordova St
 - Adding four bus stops along Cordova St

- Rush hour regulations on the south side of the street (eastbound direction) to support vehicle volumes during PM peak hours
- Improvements to the mid-block crosswalk between Main St and Gore Ave
- Changes to Powell Street
 - Left-turn lanes on Powell Street to encourage westbound traffic to utilize Cordova St at Gore Ave, Main St and Columbia St
 - Right-turn lane (except buses) at Gore Ave to provide support for transit travel times
- **Sunday Pedestrian Zone Days** (10am to 6pm) on Water St, from Richards St to Powell St at Columbia St, from June 15 to August 31. This included:
 - Developing an approach for the set-up and take-down of routine, intermittent street closures
 - Testing three different tiers of programming and resource levels across 12 Sundays, in collaboration with the GBIS:
 - High resource: event-style programming predominantly led by external collaborators
 - Medium resource: GBIS-curated activations with support from external artists and vendors
 - Low resource: low-complexity activations led predominantly by community organizations – similar to approach for city-wide plaza programming
 - Supporting the GBIS' promotions and branding efforts for the "Gastown Sunday Set" -- featuring 4 themed days programmed in addition to baseline city-supported community activations:
 - "Streetside Sessions" (high-resource programming) -- featuring three stages with local DJs along Water St & Powell St
 - "Open Air Atelier" (medium-resource programming) -- a live art battle featuring different local artists stationed along Water St, progressing over each art battle day
 - "Gastown in Bloom" (medium-resource programming) -- a flower market on 000-block featuring local vendors and growers
 - "Unscripted Days" (low-resource programming) -- unstructured days with no additional GBIS programming, focusing on market stalls and small-scale community activations
 - Working with local businesses, community partners and Local Nations to activate the full length of Water St, with 76 activations across 12 Sundays, including
 - 7 Gastown businesses/organizations
 - 18 community organizations
 - Programming from Musqueam Indian Band and Squamish Nation
 - Testing a new market stall area on 100-block of Water St, featuring vendors from:
 - 6 Gastown Businesses, and 12 sub-vendors from Gastown Makers
 - Squamish Nation artists and vendors
 - Additional vendors from external collaborators

Learnings from summer 2025, along with learnings from the 2025 pilot, will inform ongoing work on the Gastown Public Spaces Plan which will guide long-term investments in the area.

Appendix B. Data collection, monitoring and engagement approach

Staff implemented a comprehensive data collection, monitoring and engagement approach to learn about the public and business experience of the 2025 Gastown pilot, and how this summer compared to summer 2024. This was developed in collaboration with the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS) to ensure learning goals and metrics were aligned. To ensure summer 2025 data could be compared to data from summer 2024, staff used a similar methodology and metrics wherever possible. This included:

- **Transportation data**, to understand how the changes impacted access, circulation, network and visitation:
 - Around 20 days of traffic counts on Water St (including vehicles, bikes and micromobility devices and pedestrian counts), on weekdays and weekends
 - Traffic counts at key intersections in Gastown, Downtown and DTES
 - Vehicle and transit travel times
 - EasyPark and Mobi usage
- **Business engagement**, to understand the impact on Gastown businesses:
 - 64 survey responses (open from August 11 to September 7), promoted through 50+ one-on-one interviews and door-knocking, notification letters and the GBIS
 - Weekly check-ins and monthly workshops (starting January) with staff and representatives from the GBIS
- **Public engagement**, to collect feedback from the Gastown community and visitors:
 - 718 responses to the public survey (live on Shape Your City from July 15 to September 7) – promoted through City social media accounts, notification letters, QR codes on signage throughout Gastown and the GBIS
 - 66 emails and 311 cases
 - 3 community pop-up events
- An **economic impact assessment**, comparing year-over-year sales data from both Gastown and Downtown, conducted by Jon Stover & Associates using Moneris point-of-sale data
- A **public life study**, to understand peoples' intent, needs and experiences when visiting Gastown:
 - 16 public life observation sessions on Water St on select Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays
 - 828 on-site intercept surveys on Water St (conducted between July 16 and August 31) on select Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays – conducted by The Mustel Group
 - 425 on-site intercept surveys on Cordova St before implementation of the two-way design (baseline survey conducted between April and May 2025) and 616 intercept surveys during the two-way pilot (pilot survey conducted between July 29 and August 10) – conducted by The Mustel Group

Appendix C. Summary of key data findings

Below are highlights of findings from different data sources. Reports with more supporting information will be published on the project website.

Transportation data – key findings

Traffic data was collected to capture the existing conditions and assess the impacts of two-way Cordova, Sunday Pedestrian Zone Days and broader network changes on pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles. The City used camera footage collected at intersections and mid-block locations that were manually processed by Transportation staff to count the number of pedestrians, vehicles, and people riding bikes or other micromobility devices at these locations. Baseline data was gathered before the pilot in spring 2025, and pilot-period data was collected in summer 2025; previously data was collected in 2023 and during the 2024 pilot for year-to-year comparisons. Additional data collection is underway to evaluate winterization impacts. External data was requested from TransLink, Mobi and EasyPark to understand pilot effects on travel times and effects on parkade usage on Water St (Lot 31) and Cordova St (Lot 126). TomTom GPS data was also obtained through a consultant to monitor average vehicle travel times.

Vehicles:

- On average, weekday daily vehicle volumes dropped by 45% on Water St compared to baseline (Spring 2025). Although volumes decreased, vehicle queuing was still observed on Water St east of the intersection with Richards St and Cordova St. To accommodate two-way travel on Cordova St, the traffic signal timing at the intersection of Water St, Cordova St, and Richards St was adjusted to allow for more green time for drivers travelling east/west on Cordova St. This in turn, resulted in reduced green time for drivers on Water St which contributed to the queuing.

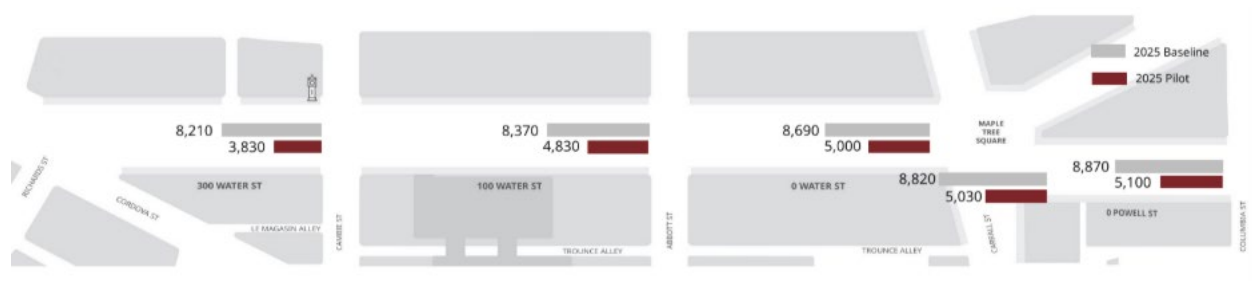


Figure 1: Weekday 24 hr Vehicle Volumes on Water Street

- Eastbound volumes on Cordova St dropped by about 45% during both AM and PM peak hours, while Hastings eastbound volume remained relatively unchanged during the peak PM period.
- In the westbound direction, Cordova St saw steady usage during the AM peak hour, with approximately 400-500 vehicles observed near the Cordova St and Richards St intersection.

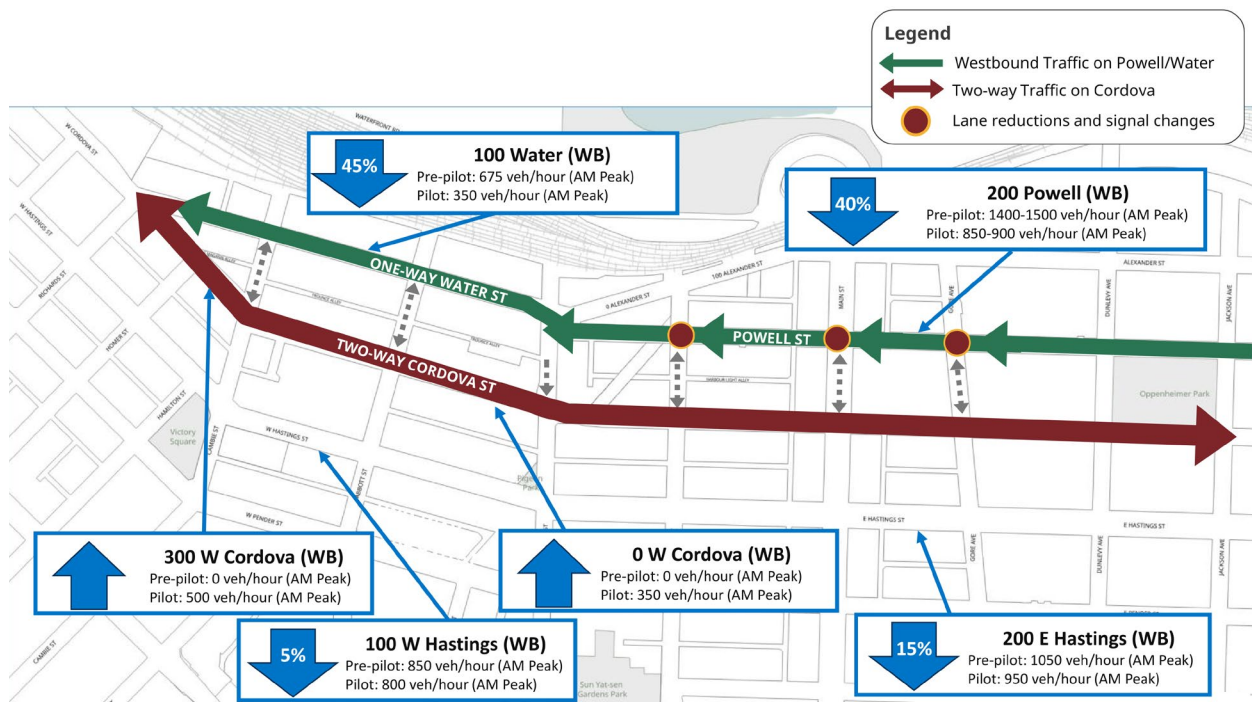


Figure 2: Weekday AM Peak Hour, Westbound Vehicle Volume Change on Water St, Powell St, Cordova St and Hastings St

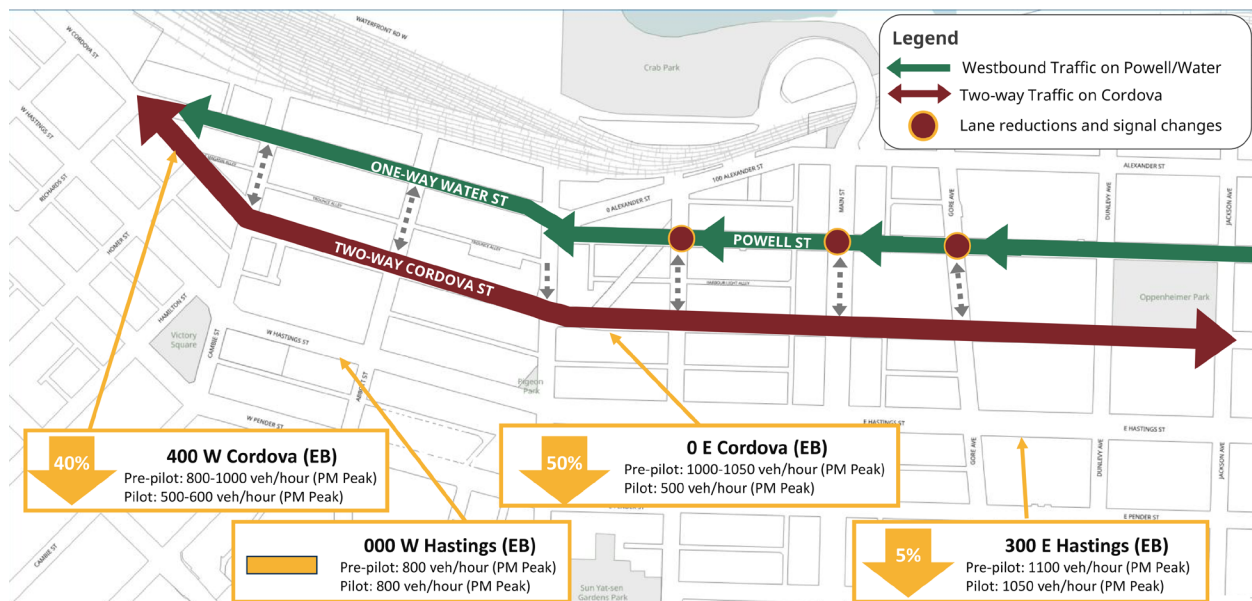


Figure 3: Weekday PM Peak Hour, Eastbound Vehicle Volume Change on Cordova St and Hastings St

- On Sundays during the afternoon peak hour, when Water Street was closed to traffic, about 300 vehicles used westbound Cordova St as a detour.
- TomTom GPS data shows that weekday vehicle travel times across east-west corridors between Granville St and Clark Dr initially increased from April to June after the beginning of the pilot. By August, a combination of traffic interventions from the City and the adjustment of driving behaviour yielded travel time improvements. This trend is similar to the transit travel time improvements observed in August. These changes are summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Travel Time and Average Speed Change across Major Corridors (Weekdays)

	Water St WB	Powell St WB	Cordova St WB	Hastings St WB	Cordova St EB	Hastings St EB
Peak Hour April Travel Time (mm:ss)	9am	9am	N/A	9am	2pm	2pm
April Average Speed (km/h)	3:55	9:09	N/A	10:42	9:07	9:07
	11	18	N/A	16	18	19
Peak Hour June Travel Time (mm:ss)	9am	9am	9am	9am	5pm	5pm
June Average Speed (km/h)	4:05	10:22	6:11	12:28	15:40	11:38
	11	16	12	14	11	15
Peak Hour August Travel Time (mm:ss)	9am	8am	8am	8am	2pm	2pm
August Average Speed (km/h)	3:45	9:05	5:06	10:00	11:20	10:18
	12	18	15	17	15	17

- Origin–destination analysis indicates a decline in the number of trips originating east of Clark Dr and passing through 100-block of Water St during the pilot. This reduction has lowered the share of users passing through the 100-block of Water St from 58% before the pilot to 45% during the pilot. This pattern indicates people coming from farther east tried to avoid Water St and found alternative routes. These trips were likely not destined for Water St and therefore chose to avoid the corridor during the pilot. Further analysis of the data indicates that before the pilot about 6% of vehicle traffic on Water St was destined for the area, whereas during the pilot, this number increased to 10%.

Pedestrians:



Figure 4: Weekday 24 Hr Pedestrian Volumes on Water Street

- Weekdays on Water St:
 - 26% increase in people walking during the 2025 pilot compared to the 2023 baseline (September 2023)
 - 13% decrease in people walking on weekdays during the 2025 pilot compared to the 2024 pilot

- Sundays from 10am – 6pm on Water St:
 - 19% increase in people walking on Water St during the 2025 pilot, compared to the 2024 pilot
 - Water St experienced high pedestrian activity from 10am to 10pm on Sundays, with over 1,000 pedestrians per hour on 300-block. The highest activity (3,050 pedestrians) was observed from 3pm – 4pm.

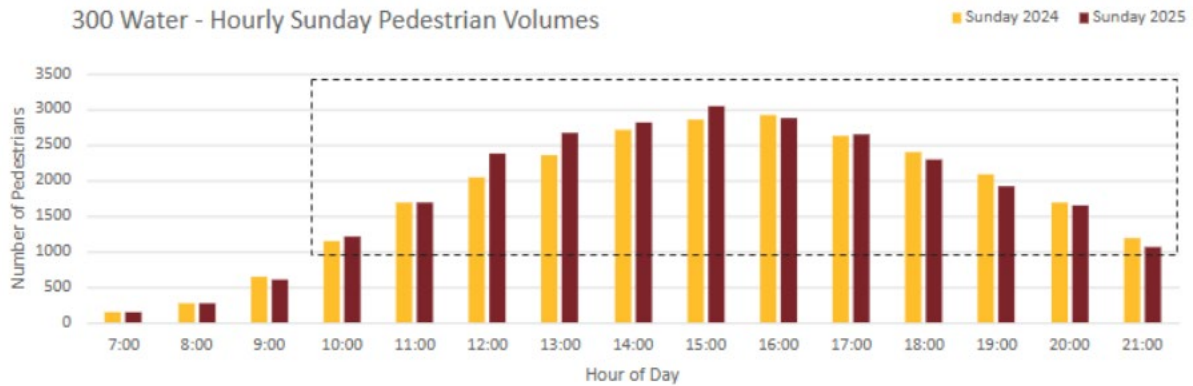


Figure 5: Hourly Sunday Pedestrian Volumes on 300-block Water St

Cycling & micromobility:

- Weekdays on Water St:
 - Pilot 2025 compared to Baseline in 2023
 - 160% increase in eastbound cycling volumes
 - 18% increase in westbound cycling volumes
 - Pilot 2025 compared to Pilot 2024
 - 8% increase in eastbound cycling volumes
 - 18% decrease in westbound cycling volumes
 - Non-compliance
 - Westbound cyclists were observed using the eastbound-only bike lane 36% of the time on the 300-block of Water St, 18% on the 100-block, and 16% on the 000-block.
 - 16% of westbound cyclists were observed using the eastbound-only bike lane on 000-block of Water St. As cyclists continued westward the rate of non-compliance increased to 18% on 100-block with a peak of 36% on 300-block.
 - 36% of westbound cyclists were observed using the eastbound-only bike lane on 300-block of Water St. On 100-block it was 18% and on 000-block it was 16%.

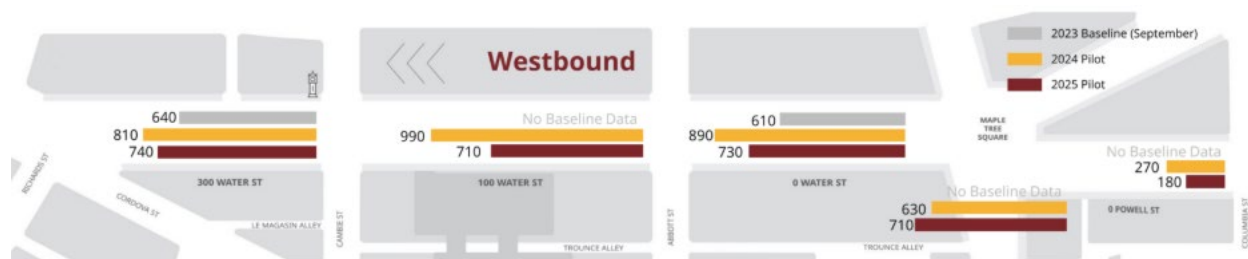


Figure 6: Weekday 24 Hr Bike and Micromobility Volumes on Water St - Westbound



Figure 7: Weekday 24 Hr Bike and Micromobility Volumes on Water St – Eastbound

- **Sundays on Water St:**
 - 11% increase in eastbound cycling on Sundays during the 2025 pilot compared to the 2024 pilot.
 - 13% decrease in westbound cycling on Sundays during the 2025 pilot compared to the 2024 pilot.
- **Weekdays on Cordova St:**
 - 11% decrease in eastbound cycling on Weekdays during the 2025 pilot compared to the 2024 pilot.
 - 265% increase in westbound cycling on Weekdays during the 2025 pilot compared to the 2024 pilot.

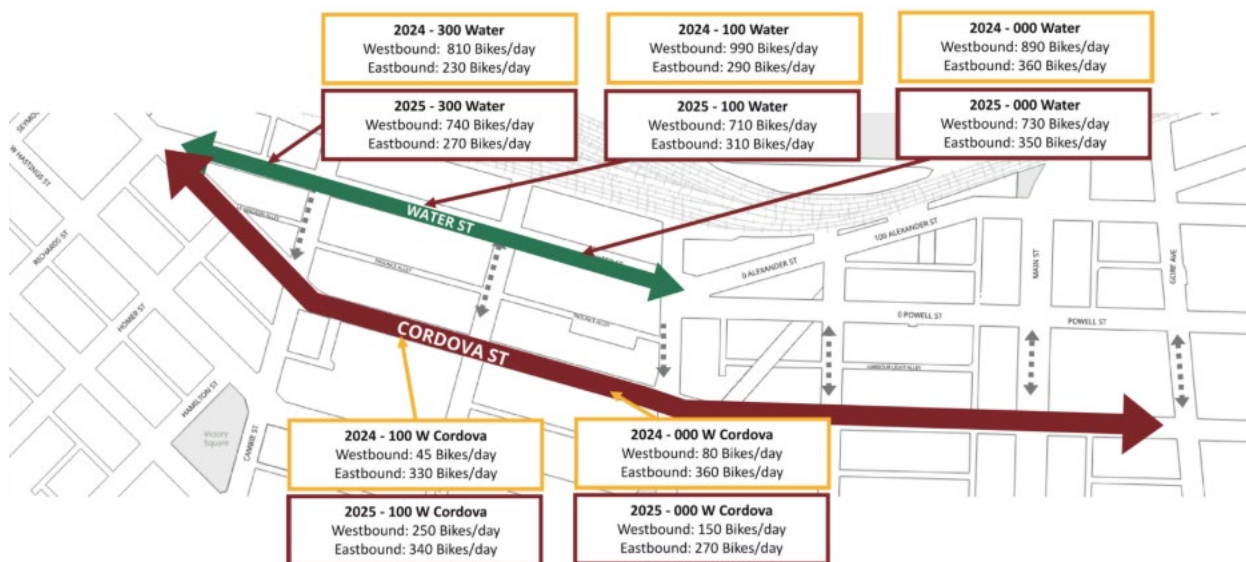


Figure 8: Weekday 24 Hr Bike and Micromobility Volume Change on Water St and Cordova St

Mobi Bike Share:

- The Maple Tree Square station was consistently ranked in the top 25% of system stations during the 2024 and 2025 summer pilot months and was the most used station in Gastown.
- Mobi riders used the Gastown stations more in July than in August this year.
- The most active times for Mobi Stations in Gastown was between 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm.
- During the 2025 summer, station usage was relatively consistent across all days of the week. In July, Wednesday and Thursday were the most popular days in the area. In August, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday were the days with the most station interactions.

Transit:

- Eastbound transit travel time on Cordova St increased significantly at the outset of the pilot, especially from noon to evening, but a series of improvements proved effective in reducing the travel time.
 - During the PM Peak hour, travel times along Cordova St from Waterfront Station to Clark Dr increased by 33% (+2 minutes 30 seconds) from April 2025 to June 2025. After bus priority measures (extension of eastbound rush regulations from Columbia St to Main St) were implemented, runtimes in July decreased by 10% compared to June.
- Westbound transit travel time on Powell St and Pender St recorded greater fluctuation across the time of day than eastbound travel times on Cordova St but followed a similar trend of delays at the outset of the pilot that improved from June to August.

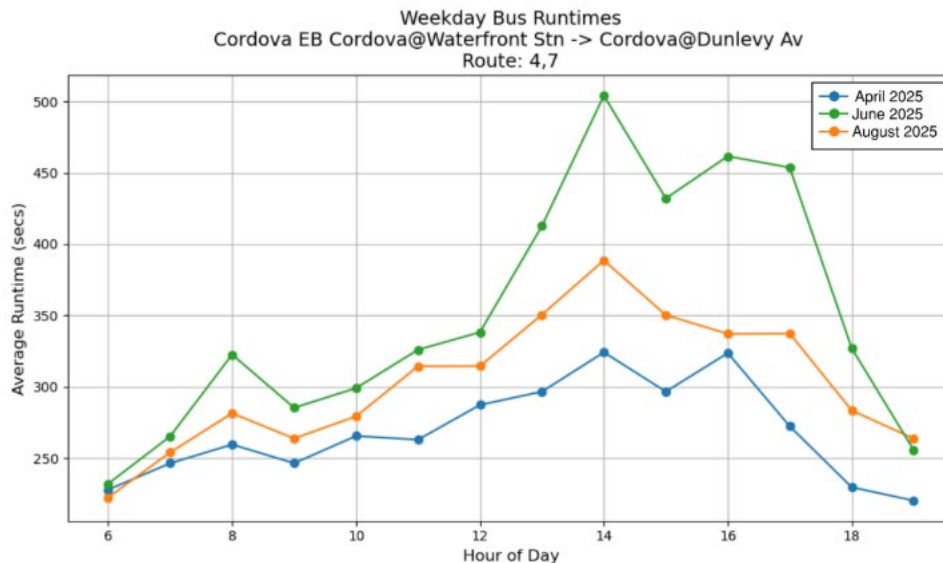


Figure 9: Weekday Eastbound Bus Runtimes on Cordova St from Waterfront Station to Dunlevy Ave

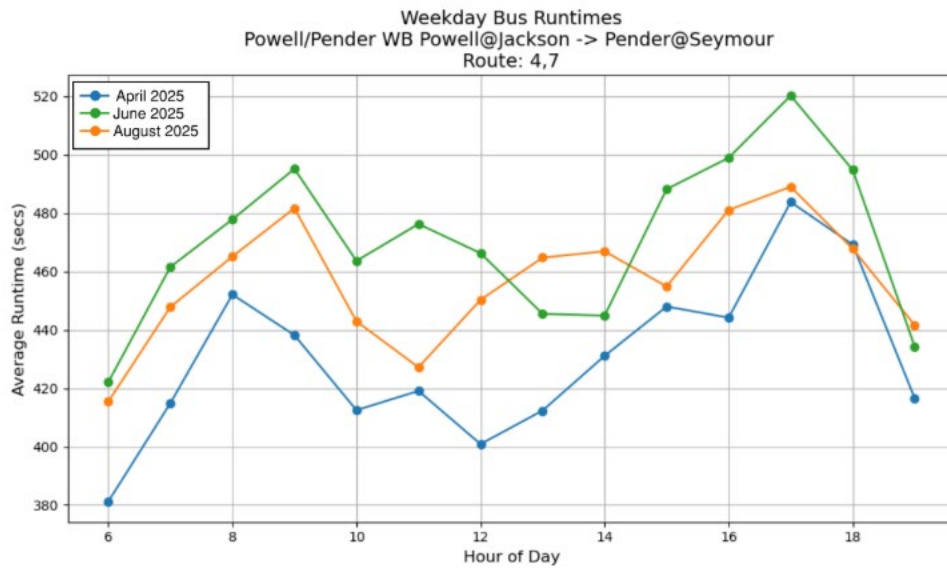


Figure 10: Weekday Westbound Bus Runtimes on Powell St and Pender St from Jackson Ave to Seymour St

Tour Buses:

- Four tour bus zones were provided in Gastown on 300-block Richards St, 400-block W Cordova St, 100-block W Cordova St, and 200-block Columbia St.
 - On weekdays the zone on Richards St had the most use with over 40 buses stopped between 7:00 am to 7:00pm, while all the other zones had less than ten buses stop each. Tour buses were also observed idling on 100-block of Water St.
 - On Sundays, while Water St was closed to vehicle traffic, more buses utilized the Cordova St tour bus zones with 30 and 15 stops respectively at 400-block W Cordova St and 100-block W Cordova St. This, along with staff observations, indicates that tour bus operators greatly preferred to drive on Water St instead of Cordova St when possible.
 - The average dwell time of buses exceeded the posted allowed time at all stops in Gastown.

Table 2: Weekday Summary Table for Tour Bus Zones

	300 Richards	400 W Cordova	100 W Cordova	200 Columbia
Avg Buses per Hour	4	0	1	0
Number of Buses (7 am to 7 pm)	44	3	8	3
Legal Time allowed at Stop (h:mm)	0:03	0:03	0:15	1:00
Average Time at Stop (h:mm)	0:11	0:06	0:41	3:49
Median Time at Stop (h:mm)	0:06	0:03	0:39	4:27
75 th Percentile Dwell Time (h:mm)	0:15	0:09	0:46	4:43

Table 3: Sunday Summary Table for Tour Bus Zones

	300 Richards	400 W Cordova	100 W Cordova	200 Columbia
Buses per Hour	2	2	1	0
Number of Buses (7 am to 7 pm)	23	30	15	3
Legal Time allowed at Stop (h:mm)	0:03	0:03	0:15	1:00
Average Time at Stop (h:mm)	0:14	0:09	0:18	3:30
Median Time at Stop (h:mm)	0:10	0:18	0:21	3:00
75 th Percentile Dwell Time (h:mm)	0:26	0:14	0:24	4:02

EasyPark Parkade:

- Parkade usage in May/June for Lots 31 (on Water St) and Lot 126 (on Cordova St) was higher in 2025 than 2024. However, parkade usage during July/August was lower during 2025 when compared to the 2024 summer pilot period.

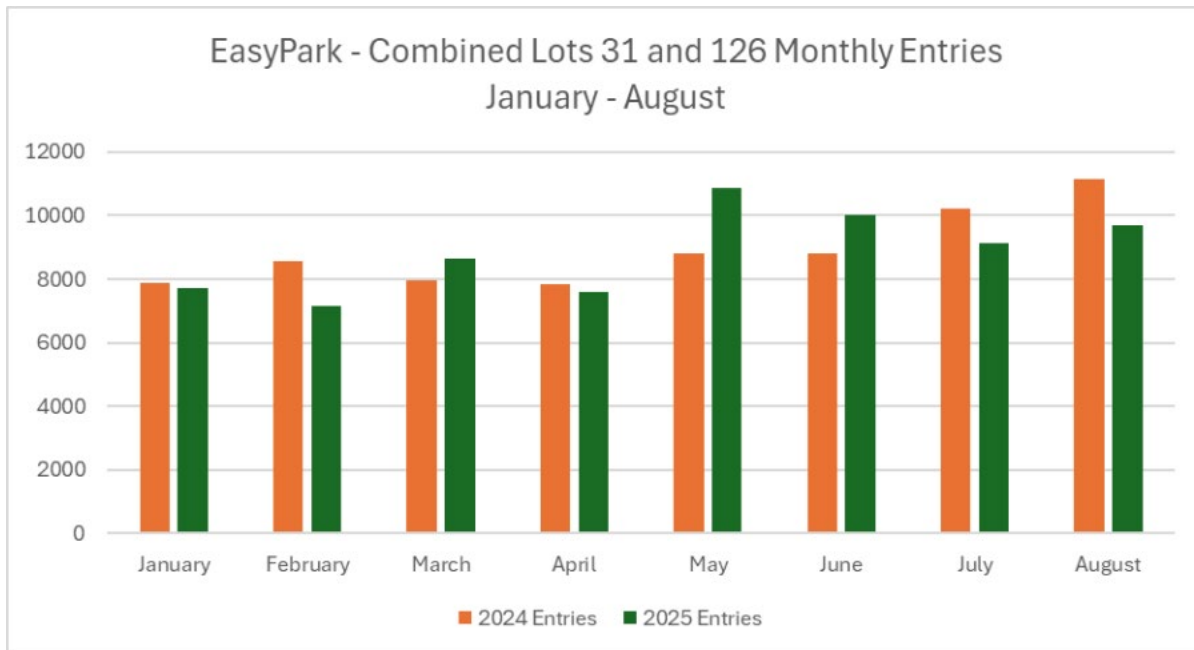


Figure 11: Combined EasyPark Entries for Lot 31 and Lot 126

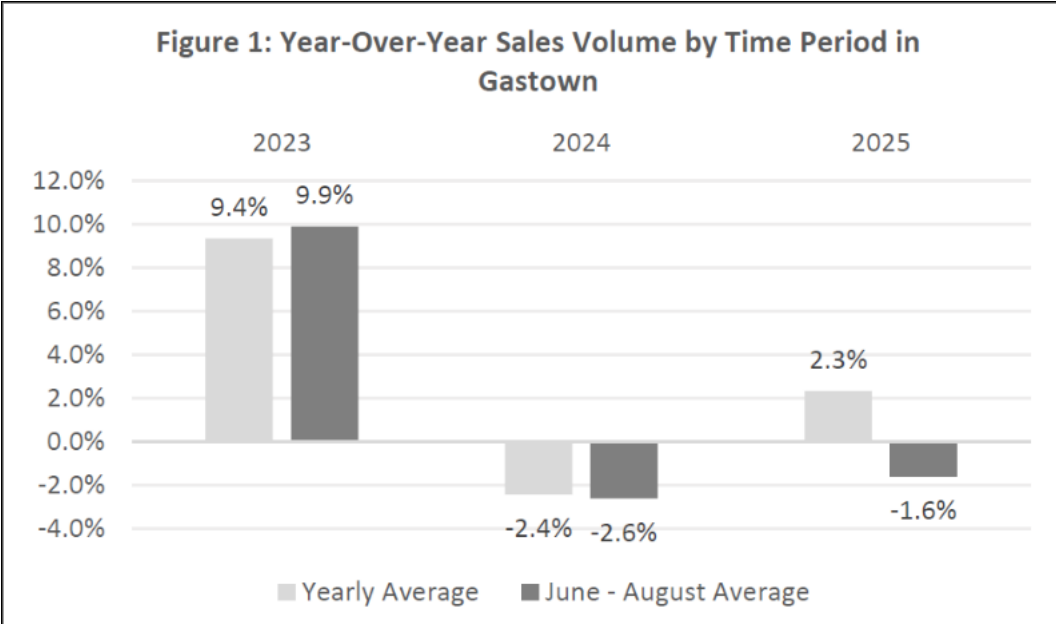
Economic impact assessment – key findings

For the economic impact assessment, the City engaged Jon Stover & Associates as economic consultants within the Gastown Public Spaces Plan consultancy to build on their previous report from the 2024 Pilot. Similar to 2024, the City also purchased Moneris point-of-sale data for both Gastown and Downtown to support this analysis and allow for longitudinal and cross-boundary comparisons.

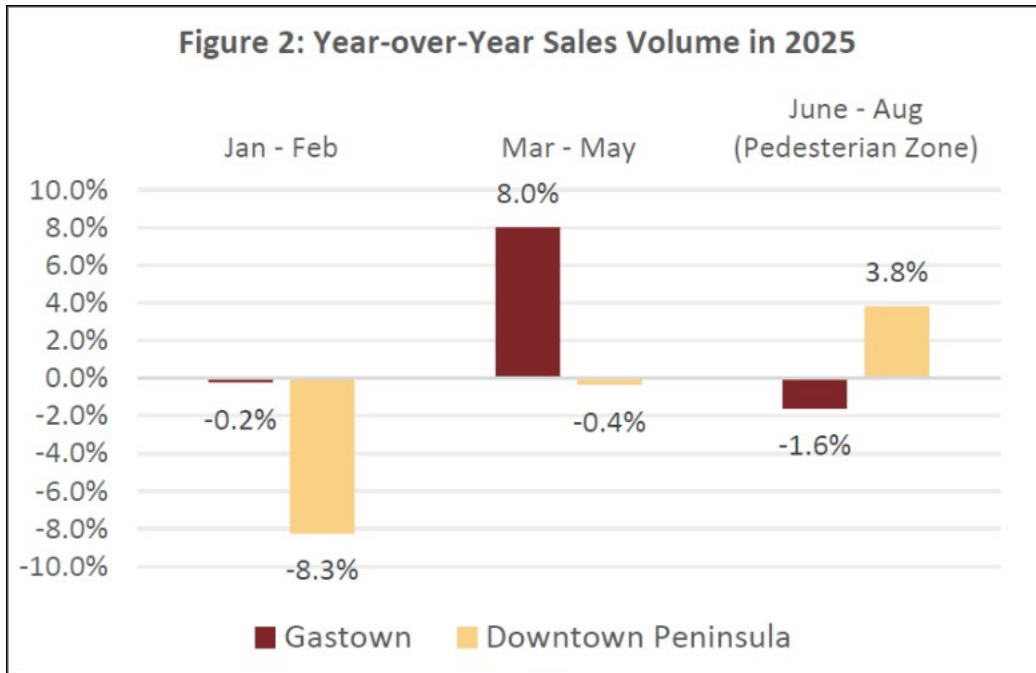
Moneris data is based on credit and debit transaction volume processed by Moneris merchants. The data are anonymized, so that it does not identify any Moneris merchant or individual. Moneris data are aggregated results that are consistent, comparable, and a reflection of the market-based economic trends. Moneris data are the standard reference used in news publications and economic reporting to assess short-term shifts in consumer spending. The dataset represents up to 30 percent of Canadian merchants and is weighted to reflect the national retail mix, making it a strong proxy for local spending patterns. While it does not include all sales and merchants, such as cash sales and some small independent merchants using other payment systems, it remains the most comprehensive real-time indicator of retail activity available at the district or neighbourhood scale. Keeping the data source consistent with prior year allowed for year over year comparisons, while obtaining data for the Downtown provides a reference for analyzing pilot impacts compared to wider dynamics facing the entire Downtown area.

Sales performance (June–August 2025 pilot period)

- Sales activity in Gastown rose through most of the summer in 2025 before dipping again in late August.
- Compared to 2024, Gastown sales are up 2.3% year-to-date through August 2025,
- In 2025, the June to August average was –1.6% in 2025 compared with –2.6% in 2024 (see Figure 1).
- In 2025, Gastown outperformed Downtown during March to May (+8.0% vs. –0.4%) but recorded lower sales growth than Downtown during the pilot months of June to August (–1.6% vs. +3.8%) (see Figure 2).



Source: Moneris (2025)
*2025 Moneris data goes up to August 2025

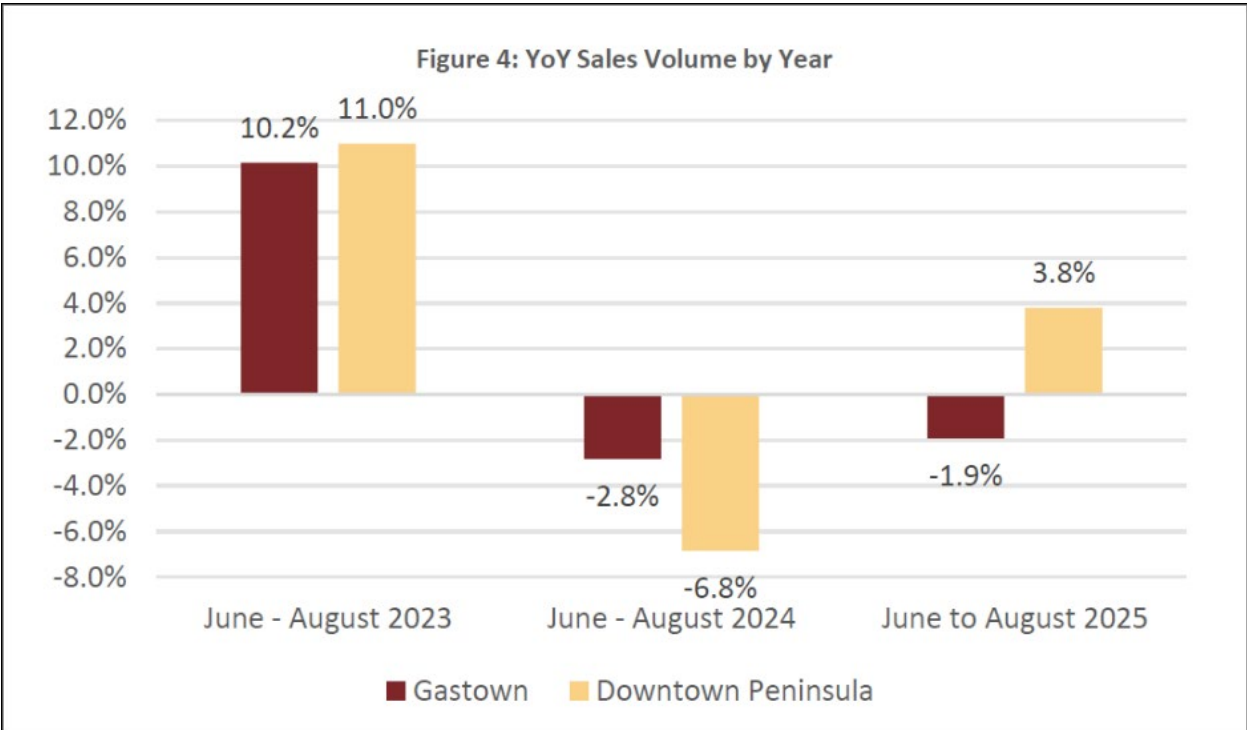


Source: Moneris (2025)

Sales performance (June 2023–August 2025)

Canada and Downtown Vancouver are still dealing with economic challenges. Rising prices, higher interest rates, and more cautious household spending are the main factors shaping the outlook. Both Gastown and Downtown remain exposed to broader macro trends: cautious consumers, higher costs of living, and persistent storefront vacancy.

- Year-over-year retail sales in both Gastown and Downtown have followed similar seasonal patterns since 2023, with recurring summer peaks and winter slowdowns.
- Summer retail sales (in the months of June through August) have declined slightly since 2023 in both Gastown and the Downtown peninsula. Total Gastown retail sales are down 4.6% over the last two years and total Downtown peninsula retail sales are down 3.3%.



Source: Moneris (2025)

Business survey – key findings

This survey was live between August 11 and September 7, available to local Gastown businesses only through targeted outreach. Of the 64 surveys completed, 53% were located on Water St and 19% on Cordova St, including a mix of food and beverage businesses (44%), retail (36%), and office & professional services (13%).

- Majority of business respondents had a positive experience of Water St this summer, with a slightly more positive experience Monday to Saturday (77%) than on car-free Sundays (72%)
- Many businesses reported a perceived increase in foot traffic as a result of the enhancements and changes this summer – particularly on car-free Sundays (70%)

Response	Mon – Sat	Car-free Sun	2024 Survey
Increased or somewhat increased	53%	70%	41%
No change	23%	12%	19%
Decreased or somewhat decreased	19%	18%	35%
Unsure	5%	-	4%
Number of responses	57	50	89

- Many businesses reported a perceived increase in revenue as a result of the enhancements and changes this summer – particularly on car-free Sundays (66%)

Response	Mon – Sat	Car-free Sun	2024 Survey
Increased or somewhat increased	42%	66%	37%
No change	26%	18%	15%
Decreased or somewhat decreased	25%	16%	40%
Unsure	7%	-	8%
Number of responses	57	50	89

- 80% of businesses said that they did not experience negative impacts to operations on car-free Sundays
- Many businesses were neutral (38%) about how cycling was accommodated on Water St this summer, with a fairly even split between positive (33%) and negative (28%) sentiments
- About half of businesses had a positive experience of two-way Cordova St (49%)
- Majority of businesses (81%) want the Pedestrian Zone to return in future summers, up from last summer’s survey results (59%)

Response	2025 Survey	2024 Survey
Yes or probably yes	81%	59%
No or probably no	14%	35%
Unsure	5%	6%
Number of responses	64	89

- Many business respondents (39%) want to keep the Pedestrian Zone once a week, while about half want to see the pilot expanded either every weekend (25%) or summer-long (23%)
- More businesses participated in support tools, programming, and activation compared to 2024 (42 up from 23 in 2024)
- 50% of businesses felt the GBIS social media promotion had a positive impact on their business this summer; 35% hadn't heard of the promotional efforts
- Key themes from the business survey:
 - Top three things businesses liked about the pilot:
 - New places to sit/rest (particularly Maple Tree Square seating)
 - Sunday programming
 - Two-way Cordova Street (improved access and circulation)
 - Top three things that businesses disliked about the pilot:
 - Traffic and circulation (confusion/disruption, right-hand turn ban)
 - Cycling infrastructure (unsafe/confusing)
 - Lack of and difficulty parking
 - Top three things that businesses want to see more of:
 - Extend Sunday car-free hours (more days, extension of hours into the evening)
 - More events, activations and programming
 - Improved marketing/awareness

Public survey – key findings

The public survey was available online through Shape Your City from July 15 to September 7 and received 718 responses. Almost all (98%) were locals (within Metro Vancouver), 38% of participants live in Gastown, and 51% in another City of Vancouver neighbourhood.

- Majority of community respondents had a positive experience on Water St this summer, with the experience of car-free Sundays slightly more positive (81%) than Monday to Saturday (77%)

Response	Mon - Sat	Car-free Sun	2024 Survey
Positive or somewhat positive	77%	81%	84%
Neutral	8%	8%	1%
Negative or somewhat negative	15%	11%	15%
Unsure	-	1%	-
Number of responses	706	667	1723

- Majority of community respondents (59%) had a positive experience of how cycling was accommodated on Water Street this summer
- About half (51%) of community respondents had a positive experience of two-way Cordova Street
- Majority of community respondents want the Pedestrian Zone to return in future summers (84%), consistent with last summer's survey results (84%)

Response	2025 Survey	2024 Survey
Yes or probably yes	84%	84%
No or probably no	12%	14%
Unsure	4%	2%
Number of responses	718	1824

- Majority of community respondents want to see the Pedestrian Zone expanded, with summer-long leading as the preferred duration (59%) followed by every weekend (18%)
- Key themes from the public survey:
 - Top three things people liked about the pilot:
 - Car-free/pedestrian only (no traffic, less noise, less pollution)
 - Places to rest/eat (seating, benches, Maple Tree Square feature)
 - Livelier, more vibrant/European atmosphere
 - Top three things people disliked about the pilot:
 - Cycling infrastructure (unsafe/confusing)
 - Reduced scope of the pilot (limited car-free hours, limited days)
 - Presence of cars felt unsafe and disruptive (pollution, noise)
 - Top three things people want to see more of:
 - To extend Sunday car-free hours (more days, extend hours into the evening)
 - More/better street furniture (seating, tables, better quality, permanent)
 - More events, activations and programming

Water St public life observations – key findings

The purpose of public life observations is to better understand behaviour and use patterns in the public realm, providing insights into who is using the space, how it is being used, and the overall “stickiness” of a block (the proportion of people lingering in a space, compared to those moving through the space). The study area was divided into five zones, one per block, with observations carried out on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. At the start and end of each shift, heat maps were created to identify informal gathering areas and track how they shifted over the course of the day.



- **General observations**
 - 300-block and Maple Tree Square are “sticky” regardless of day of week
 - 100-block, 000-block and Powell St are stickier on Sundays; Saturdays showed the lowest proportion of lingering activity across all blocks
 - A slight increase in the proportion of larger groups visiting Water St in 2025 compared to 2024, suggesting an increase in social purposes for visiting.
- **Western Gateway & 300-block**
 - Limited pedestrian use of public realm expansion
 - Perception of more tourist-centric uses compared to other blocks
 - 300-block showed high levels of “stickiness” regardless of the day of the week
 - Observed need for additional seating closer to Steam Clock (existing nearby seating often full, while seating further west on the block was available)
- **100-block**
 - Sunday market stalls provided activation/visual draw beyond Steam Clock
 - Observed need for additional seating (use of barriers for informal seating), particularly on Sundays
- **000-block**
 - Expanded seating area on south side was well-used by business patrons
 - Flower market created additional visual draw & increased lingering behaviours on flower market days – days with most “stickiness” on this block
- **Maple Tree Square**
 - New seating areas were well-used by a diversity of groups
 - Maple Tree Square showed high levels of “stickiness” regardless of the day of the week
 - Desirable location for community & partner programming

- *Powell St & Eastern Gateway*
 - Extension of Pedestrian Zone to Columbia was well-received, but required programming to encourage visitors
 - The number of people lingering on the Powell block Sundays was fairly low, with a notable increase on high-programmed days when there was intentional programming on this block
 - New location of Gastown sign showed slight increase in visitors over time as awareness increased

Water St intercept survey – key findings

The City engaged The Mustel Group to develop and administer intercept surveys, building on their previous work on Water St during the 2024 Pilot. Visitors were asked to rate a series of statements regarding their experience of visiting Water Street using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

- Walking remains the most common mode of travel to Water Street (44% overall and on Sundays), followed by transit, with patterns largely unchanged from 2024.
- The most commonly mentioned reason for visiting Water Street is social or recreational purposes (58%). However, business activity remains a key driver, with eight-in-ten visitors planning to or actually visiting a business during their trip.
- There has been a notable increase in those specifically drawn to the Water Street Pedestrian Zone on Sundays (30% vs. 8% on weekends in 2024), or the overall Water St Enhancements on Monday to Friday (26% vs 7% in 2024).
- Spending is up slightly this year, with average expenditures rising from \$80.83 in 2024 to \$88.88 in 2025. Sunday visitors spent the most on average (\$92), and visitors from outside Vancouver had the highest expenditures (\$123.40).
- Business and retail activity was notably higher on Sundays in 2025 compared to weekends in 2024, especially for restaurants, cafés, and retail stores.
- Visitor frequency remains consistent year-over-year, with about one-in-five visiting daily (20%), one-in-ten weekly (10%), and roughly one-third being first-time visitors (36%).
- Nearly every experience measure was rated higher on Sunday, apart from its appeal as a place to shop and dine, which was consistent with the weekday and Saturday ratings.
- Visitor experience ratings on Sundays were high but have declined slightly compared to 2024. On Sundays, average ratings for key experience statements ranged from 3.7 to 4.4, compared to 4.2–4.4 in 2024. The highest Sunday rating this year (4.4) was for the destination appeal of the Pedestrian Zone.
- Safety and comfort ratings for walking/rolling remain strong during the Pedestrian Zone (4.0 average, 78% agreement on Sundays) – but have declined slightly from 2024 (4.2 average).
- Visitors rated safety and comfort for cycling and micromobility use as moderate overall but reported feeling slightly more comfortable on Sundays compared to other days (average rating of 3.7 on Sunday versus 3.4 on weekdays and 3.2 on Saturdays).
- Experience ratings were generally consistent across programming levels and zones, but visitors intercepted in Maple Tree Square reported slightly higher scores for comfort when socializing and spending time, perceptions of Water Street as vibrant and lively, and safety and comfort when cycling or using a micromobility device.
- The most common suggestions for encouraging more frequent visits to Water Street were adding more shops and restaurants, making the area pedestrian-only, and improving cleanliness.

Cordova St intercept survey – key findings

The City engaged The Mustel Group to develop and administer intercept surveys on Cordova St before and after implementation of the two-way design, using a similar approach to the intercept surveys conducted in 2024 on Water St. Visitors were asked to rate a series of statements regarding their experience of visiting Cordova Street using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

- Cordova St is considered highly accessible – especially by those who travelled there on foot or via transit – but perceived ease of access declined slightly after the two-way conversion (4.3 in the Baseline to 4.1 in the Pilot).
- Ratings of safety and comfort along Cordova St are moderate and showed no notable change between survey waves (3.6 in both measures).
- Overall, visitors feel safe crossing at intersections or crosswalks on Cordova St. However, feelings of safety dropped somewhat in the Pilot (from 4.1 to 3.9), possibly indicating that the shift to two-way traffic may have reduced visitors' confidence in intersection safety.
- Most visitors are relatively comfortable with waiting for and taking a bus along Cordova St (rating of 3.7 in the Baseline and 3.8 in the Pilot).