SUMMER STREETS UPDATE & RESOLUTION

City Council – Item 6

August 10, 2020 www.cityofpaloalto.org/summerstreets
BACKGROUND – COUNCIL ACTION ON JUNE 23, 2020

1) City Council passed a resolution authorizing:
   1) Temporary street closures
   2) Temporary pilot parklet program

2) Passed an interim urgency ordinance temporarily allowing:
   1) Expansion of outdoor dining and retail on both public and private property,
   2) Waived permit fees and design review
   3) Allowing on-sale consumption of alcohol in outdoor dining areas, Lytton & Cogswell Plazas

3) Asked staff to look at lower-cost parklet options.
The ordinance and resolution passed unanimously.
STAFF RECOMMENDATION


2) **Adopt a Resolution Amending Resolution No. 9909 to:**
   1) Extend the Temporary Street Closures of California Avenue, University Avenue and Other Downtown Blocks to December 31, 2020
   2) Extend the Temporary Street Closure of University Avenue to Include the Block Between Emerson Street and High Street
   3) Extend the Expiration Date of Resolution No. 9909, Including the Duration of the Temporary Parklet Program, to September 7, 2021
   4) Allow Activities in Addition to Outdoor Dining and Retail to Occur on Temporarily Closed Streets

3) **Provide Comment and Further Direction** on the Program.
PROGRESS & ACTIVITIES

- Weekly Zoom meetings (1) Cal Ave merchants (2) Downtown merchants
- Bi-weekly Zoom meetings w/community
- Daily staff contacts w/stakeholders; phone, email, and socially distanced visits
- Review and issue permits
- Inspect construction of parklets
- Close streets to traffic and update traffic plans
- Online surveys for patrons and businesses
- Develop & issue guidelines as new uses re-open
- Ongoing communications, signage & advertising
- Weekly pedestrian, cyclists, diner counts
- Weekly parking impact counts
- 1-week traffic counts in downtown
SURVEY RESPONSES – PATRONS & COMMUNITY

203 Survey Responses*

- **Local** - 92% of respondents live in Palo Alto
- **Dining & Strolling** - 70% dined outdoors, 30% had not
- **Popular Locations** - 40% dined at Cal Ave, 20% at University, 40% at both
- **Weekends and Evening Popular** - Friday and Saturday and in the evening

- **Active Transportation Common** - 36% walked & 15% biked to Summer Streets
- **Great Parking Experience** – 95% of drivers had great parking; 5% fair
- **Feels Safe** – 95% said they felt safe
- **Will Return!** – 95% said they would continue to patronize

* as of July 23, 2020
PATRON FEEDBACK

• Positive responses, “Love it”, “Great idea!”, “Feels like Europe.”
• Requests to make this permanent or an annual (summer) activity.
• Some concerns over distancing, mask wearing, and general wisdom of dining outdoors during the pandemic.
• Even those not dining enjoyed visiting and people-watching.
Key Takeaways

- Street closed from El Camino Real to Birch.
- Birch to Park closed briefly, but re-opened.
- 11 restaurants permitted for outdoor dining.
- Evening is busier than lunch.
- Weekends are the busiest.
- Responding businesses estimate 25-60% of pre-pandemic revenue; average is 32%.
- Neighboring street parking not impacted.
UNIVERSITY AVENUE
Key Takeaways

- University Avenue closed from High St. to Cowper.
  - Adjusted on 8-7-20 to open High St and close a portion of Ramona
- 15 restaurants permitted for outdoor dining.
- Evening is busier than lunch.
- Weekends are the busiest.
- Responding businesses estimate -16-80% of pre-pandemic revenue; average is 35%.
- Cross/side street businesses report 22-60% of pre-pandemic revenue; average is 22%.
- Neighboring street parking mostly unimpacted, except one section of Webster.
PARKLETS

- Overall successful program.
- 22 parklet applications received.
- 6 parklets in use.
- City hired architect created standard plans.
- Director of Public Works updated Standards to allow for at-grade parklets.
- Parklets often accommodate less seating than indoors and less than a closed street.
ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

- **Private parking lots**
  - 2 applications for use of private lots for dining/retail.

- **Public parking lots**
  - Agreements w/the City and businesses for use of parking lot for dining/services (i.e., Rose and Crown).

- **Recreation, personal services, etc.**
  - Developing guidelines and rules that will be published.
  - Staff are working w/test cases.
RESOLUTION

Summer Streets
EXTEND STREET CLOSURES TO 12-31-2020

- Authorize extending the temporary street closures to December 31, 2020 by amending Resolution No. 9909.
- Give the City flexibility to work with stakeholders to modify the closures throughout that time.
- Modifications may include the time of day or days of the week.
- Further modifications if/when indoor dining is allowed, as the seasons change, and during the holiday shopping period.
- Staff intend to return to the City Council in early December.
ADD 1 BLOCK DOWNTOWN CLOSURE

• Staff recommend amending Resolution No. 9909 to add the block of University Avenue from **High Street to Emerson Street** to the allowable closure footprint.*
• This section of University hosts fewer diners and pedestrians than other sections and was **opened to traffic on 8-7-2020**.
• The flexibility to close this section enhances options for these restaurants and retailers in the future.

*Currently, this closure is effectuated under a separate temporary street closure permit the City has issued.*
EXTEND TEMPORARY PARKLETS TO 9-7-2021

- Staff recommend extending the expiration date of Resolution No. 9909 to allow the parklet program to run through Labor Day 2021.
- Director of Public Works to extend the duration of the permits for platform parklets through that date.
- The extension would create a longer time period over which restaurateurs could amortize the parklet investment.
- Staff recommend at-grade parklets expire 12-31-20.
ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES IN CLOSED STREETS

• Clarify that additional activities, such as recreation, are allowed to take place in closed streets.
• Such activities will require a permit to occur.
• Staff will work to minimize or eliminate conflicts between uses.
LOOKING AHEAD

Summer Streets
Items to Address Via Local Action, Planning, and Programming
- Winter weather
- Address additional topics from Business Roundtable
- Programming to aid additional industries/business types
- Sustainability of dedicated staff time and City resources

Macro-Factors Impacting Future of Local Programs
- Santa Clara County on State 3-Day Watch List
- Return to Workplaces or Extended Work From Home
- Overall contours of the pandemic
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3) Provide Comment and Further Direction on the Program.
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