



# Street Closures & Parklets

Palo Alto City Council

September 13, 2021

[www.cityofpaloalto.org](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org)



## Background

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- **June 2021 City Council:**
  - Directed the street closures to end on 9-30-21
  - Ended the proclamation of local emergency on 7-1-21
  - Asked staff to return after the summer recess to discuss this topic
- Since that time, **COVID-19 transmission rates have spiked due to the highly contagious delta variant.**
  - Santa Clara County and other Bay Area counties issued indoor mask mandates
  - Vaccinations continue to increase, with 82.2% of county residents aged 12+ fully vaccinated

# RECOMMENDATION

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## Staff recommends the City Council:

- (a) Adopt the Attached Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Close University Avenue and California Avenue and Some Intersecting Streets **Until a Date the Council Determines** and Provide Direction Regarding Associated Fees or Charges
- (b) Provide Direction Regarding the **Duration of the Temporary Parklet Program** and Development of Associated Fees or Charges
- (c) **Receive Updates** regarding the Permanent Parklet Program, the Downtown and California Avenue Streetscape Designs



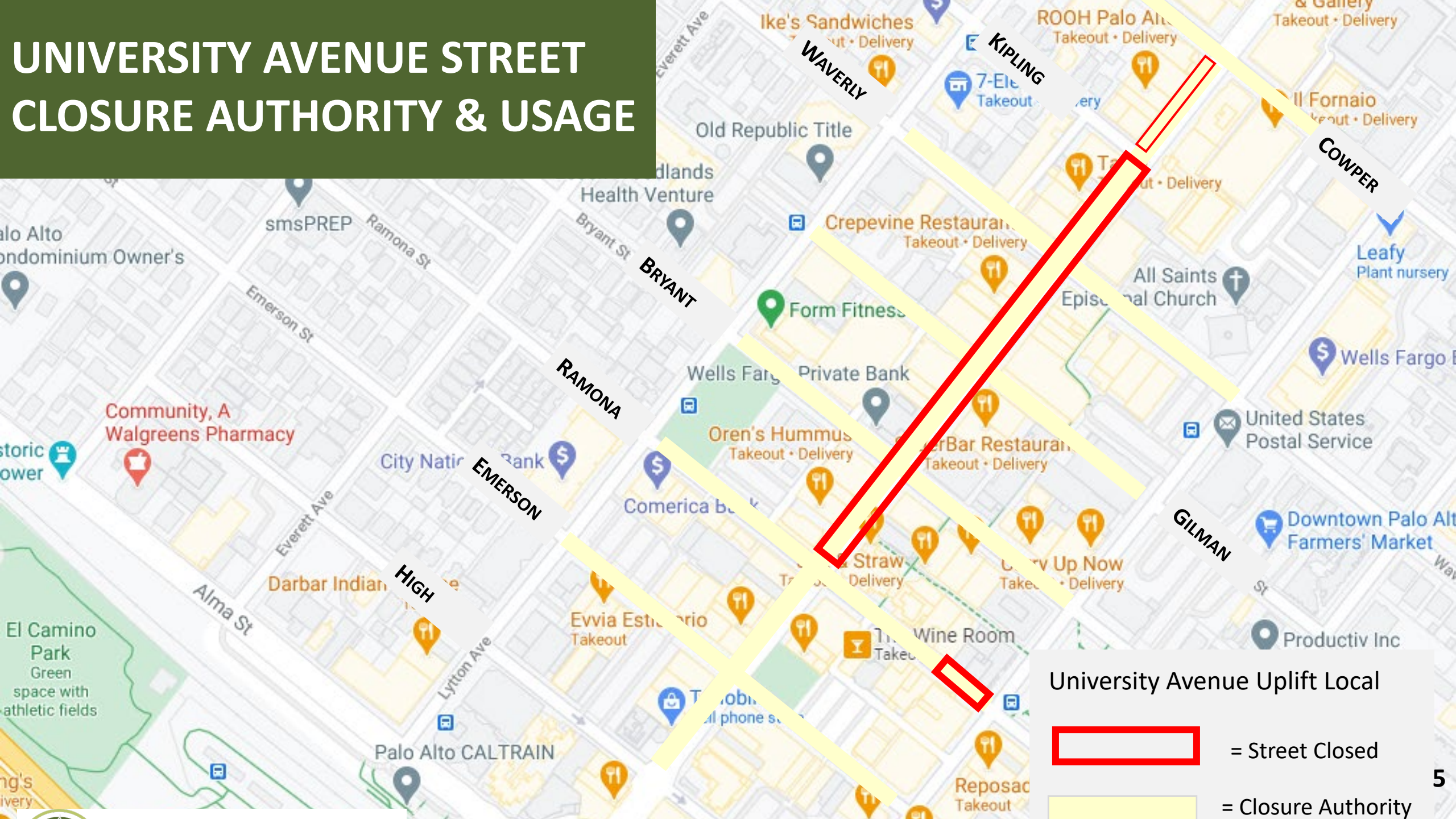
# Street Closures

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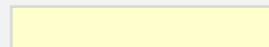
# UNIVERSITY AVENUE STREET CLOSURE AUTHORITY & USAGE



University Avenue Uplift Local



= Street Closed




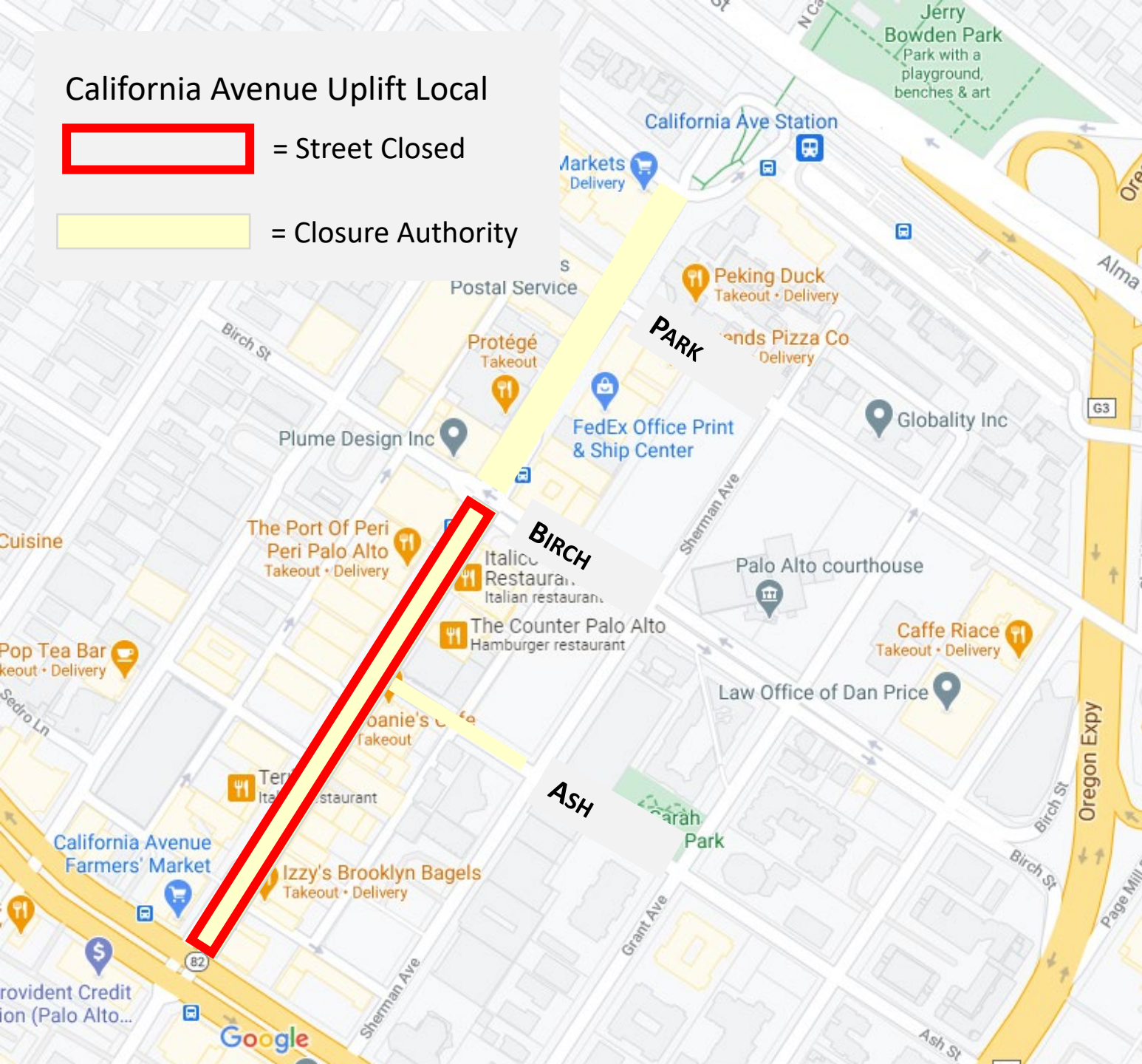
= Closure Authority



# California Avenue Uplift Local

 = Street Closed

 = Closure Authority



# CALIFORNIA AVENUE STREET CLOSURE AUTHORITY & USAGE



## STREET RE-OPENING OPTIONS

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1. **Continue closures until September 30, 2021 (no change)**
2. **Re-open Streets on Specific Date(s)**
  1. November 1 or November 22, 2021
  2. January 31, 2022
  3. Or other date
3. **Fund personnel to facilitate weekly opening/closing of the Downtown streets**
4. **Authorize the City Manager to Suspend Closures based on Weather Considerations**

# AVERAGE DAILY TRIPS - DOWNTOWN

**Table A: Traffic Counts in Downtown Palo Alto**

Location	ADT Pre-Pandemic (2016)*	July 2020 ADT (7/7/20-7/13/20)	October 2020 ADT (10/25/20 - 10/31/20)	April 2021 ADT (4/28/21-5/4/21)	Most recent August 2021 (8/25/21 - 8/31/21)
Cowper (Lytton & University)-NB+SB	N/A	2,446	2,388	2,377	<b>3,134</b>
Lytton (Cowper & Kipling) (EB+WB)	10,770	10,037	11,301	11,883	<b>12,109</b>
High (University & Hamilton) (SB)	2,363	4,169	2,723	3,451	<b>3,679</b>
Hamilton (Bryant & Gilman) (EB+WB)	7,986	4,704	6,117	6,656	<b>6,285</b>
University Ave (Middlefield and Alma)	11,717	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*\*Note: Traffic volumes likely increased from 2016 to early 2020. However, 2016 is the most recent data available*



# Sales Tax Analysis

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- Staff compared sales tax remittance from Jan. - June of 2021 to the same time period of 2020, and then 2020 compared to 2019.
- Staff also performed “**case studies**” where staff benchmarked a single business against itself, then compared to similar businesses in different geographic locations.
- Generally, sales tax increased in 2021 compared to 2020; and 2020 saw large decreases compared to 2019.
- **The findings are mixed and do not clearly indicate whether the closures alone are the contributing factor driving increasing or decreasing sales tax activity.** Remote work, increased online sales, reluctance of patrons, and seasonal trends all impact demand, and sales activity, but are beyond the scope of this analysis.

# Sales Tax Analysis: Retail

- Retail activity in Cal Ave, Downtown, and citywide saw **large drops from 2019 - 2020** and **increases from 2020 – 2021**.
- **Case Studies** - The 4 retailers shown to the right saw increases from 2020 – 2021, but those outside the closure saw greater increases.

Retail - Overall		
Geographic Area**	% 2019 to 2020	%2020 to 2021
University Ave District	(33.2%)	(1.5%)
California Ave District	(33.8%)	33.5%
Remainder of City (excludes Cal. & University)	(41.4%)	47.3%

Case Study of 2 Apparel Retailers		
Relative Location	% 2019 to 2020	%2020 to 2021
Inside Closure	(55.3%)	42.6%
Outside Closure	(61.0%)	53.5%

Case Study of 2 General Retail (Non-Apparel)		
Relative Location	% 2019 to 2020	%2020 to 2021
Near Closure	(56.6%)	53.4%
Outside Closure	(59.2%)	85.4%



# Sales Tax Analysis: Food Services

- Generally, food service throughout the city saw significant decreases from 2019 to 2020, and modest increases from 2020 to 2021; lower percentage increase than retail.
- **Case Study University Ave - 2** restaurants show the near closure restaurant outperforming the one inside the closure.
- **Case Study Cal Ave - 2** restaurants show increasing activity in the closure versus near the closure.

Food Services		
Geographic Area**	% 2019 to 2020	%2020 to 2021
University Ave District	(48.5%)	11.5%
California Ave District	(39.4%)	12.4%
Remainder of City (excludes Cal. & University)	(45.6%)	9.7%

2 Restaurants – Cal Ave		
Relative Location	% 2019 to 2020	%2020 to 2021
Inside Closure	14.5%	(2.0%)
Near Closure	(45.5%)	(24.0%)

2 Restaurants – University Ave		
Relative Location	% 2019 to 2020	%2020 to 2021
Inside Closure	(44.0%)	90.3%
Near Closure	(51.6%)	102.7%

# Development of Fees

- If Council extends the street closures, Council may also direct staff to develop a fee or charge for the street closure program.
- This fee may seek to recover costs associated with the street closure, including enhanced cleaning.
- In the event Council elects to open/close the streets weekly, the fee could recover those associated costs.
- Development of the fee would require staff resources and further Council action.





# Parklets

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## Parklets Guidelines Today

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- Parklets may use parallel or angled parking spaces
  - Parallel – at least 2 contiguous spaces
  - Angled – at least 2 contiguous spaces
- Safety requirements
  - Setbacks of 4 feet to active parking spaces and driveways, enclosures/railings, wheel stops, delineators, wind loading design
- No utility access points shall be covered by the parklet.
- Neighboring businesses encouraged to cooperate with each other, but a business not wanting its own parklet may not prevent placement of parklet by another business





## Parklets

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- **Staff recommend extending the temporary parklet program to June 30, 2022** to allow for full development and adoption of the permanent program.
- **Summarized Schedule**
  - Ongoing through October 2021: Learning from Other Cities
  - Winter 2021/2022: Prepare Draft Parklet Guidelines,
  - Winter 2021/2022: Ordinance, and Permit Costs –Engaging Architectural Review Board (ARB)
  - Winter/Spring 2022: ARB review and recommendation of Parklet Guidelines, Ordinance, and Lease Costs
  - Spring/Summer 2022: Council Review of Guidelines, Adoption of Ordinance, and Lease Rates

*\*Environmental review may also be necessary.*



## Parklet Fees

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- Council has waived encroachment permit fees for temporary parklets.
- Staff will develop a parklet fee/charge for the permanent program.
- The Council may also consider directing staff to develop appropriate fees and charges for the temporary parklet program; however, as this would detract from the efforts to develop the permanent parklet program, staff is not recommending fees for temporary parklets.

# Streetscape Update

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# Streetscape Downtown & Cal Ave

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## Downtown

- RFP scope of work developed for Downtown
- Proposals are due at the end of September
- Staff will select a vendor for Council approval

## Cal Ave

- Developing long-term plan
- Working to ensure the permanent parklet program enhances the Cal Ave streetscape



# Discussion & Recommendation

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# DISCUSSION

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- Downtown-Specific Questions, Discussion and Direction
  - University Avenue
  - Ramona Street
- California Avenue-Specific Questions, Discussion and Direction



# RECOMMENDATION

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