

JoAnne Adamson  
Manager, Property Management – City of Kelowna

Dear Ms Adamson:

We would like to take this opportunity to share some feedback of the City's Bernard Avenue closure and patio program in 2020.

We received many positive comments about the atmosphere and general feel of the downtown during the closure of Bernard Avenue. These comments were received by residents, visitors, volunteers and staff alike. Our staff and volunteers were out and about almost every day on breaks to enjoy coffee or the atmosphere along the closed portion of Bernard. One visitor made the correlation that on Sunday it was possible to visit a market with fresh Okanagan fruits and vegetables at one end of the street, and then walk down and dine in a restaurant featuring similar product just a few steps away.

Although difficult to plan and manage due to COVID-19 the activation block became another very positive and vibrant space when the performers or Downtown Kelowna Association vendor booths were installed. When our staff and volunteers were on site with our mobile visitor centre they chatted with many residents and visitors that appreciated the opportunity to ask questions, enjoy the music, or speak with businesses they might not have seen while walking Bernard Avenue.

Tourism Kelowna also participated in the patio program this year to expand our service area due to the limited capacity inside of our building. This additional outdoor space allowed us to service more visitors and residents while ensuring proper physical distancing and other safety protocols. Our summer would not have been as successful as it was without this additional space.

Given public health announcements regarding COVID-19 cases linked to Kelowna, the closure of Bernard Avenue, or the wildfire smoke seen in the late summer, it was very difficult to tell what factors were overall influencing the number of people visiting our centre week over week. We found that although our traffic drastically decreased in 2020 compared to the same months in 2019, our average daily traffic remained quite steady from our re-opening date on June 28, until mid-September.

Tourism Kelowna supports the City Staff recommendation to council to turn the closure of the 200 & 300 block of Bernard Avenue into an annual event in the summer months. We also support the trial of a green streets initiative on the 400 & 500 block of Bernard Ave for the summer of 2021. Following consultation of businesses on these blocks we believe these initiatives will enhance the Downtown Kelowna experience for visitors to our city and also enhance the quality of life for local residents.

Sincerely,

Chris Lewis  
Director of Visitor Experience