

Report to Council



Date: April 26, 2021
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: 2021 Bernard Avenue Sidewalk Seating Program
Department: Sport & Event Services

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive, for information, the report from Sport & Event Services dated April 26, 2021 regarding the activities related to the implementation of the sidewalk seating program on Bernard Avenue;

AND THAT Council approve the implementation of the sidewalk seating program, as described in this report, on Bernard Avenue.

Purpose:

To update Council on the activities related to the potential implementation of the sidewalk seating program on Bernard Avenue and seek endorsement for its activation.

Background:

On March 15th, 2021 Council endorsed the implementation of the 'Meet me on Bernard' program for the summer months on an annual basis, which will occur on the 200 to 500 blocks (Abbott Street to St. Paul Street) of Bernard Avenue.

On March 31st, 2021, in response to the significant increase in COVID-19 infections, the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) ordered the suspension of all indoor dining. This includes restaurants, coffee shops, cafes, cafeterias and other food primary and liquor primary establishments such as pubs, bars, and lounges. Under the order, food and beverage service is limited to delivery, carry out or use of outdoor patios. This order was set to expire on April 19th, 2021 however, the Provincial Health Officer has extended the order to at least May 25, 2021.

Due to the health order, several restaurant owners have expressed their desire for the City to expediate the 'Meet me on Bernard' program earlier than the start date of July 1st. Staff have explored the feasibility of extending patios before the July 1 start date of the 'Meet me on Bernard' program as a measure to support Bernard Avenue businesses impacted by the order.

Discussion:

When exploring a solution that will assist Bernard Avenue food and beverage establishments with continuing their services, the main objective was to determine how to create extra patio space while considering public safety, fiscal responsibility, available resources, and current expectations of neighbouring businesses.

Staff explored the potential of an early 'Meet me on Bernard' closure as requested by some businesses, however, through internal discussions considering the above factors, it was determined that utilizing the parking stalls and the sidewalk furnishing area directly in-front of participating businesses would be the most effective solution at this time that could be quickly and efficiently implemented through the Sidewalk Seating Program. Utilizing the parking stalls and sidewalk furnishing areas provides the following benefits and considerations:

- *Expand existing outdoor patio space*

This solution allows businesses to expand the area of patios and therefore be able to accommodate more customers. Participating businesses will be vetted and regulated through the Sidewalk Seating Program as administered by the Property Management Department, which includes a fencing requirement to delineate boundaries as well as provide a safety buffer between patrons and Bernard traffic.

- *Pedestrian and vehicular traffic preserved*

Utilizing only the parking stalls and sidewalk furnishing areas allows vehicular and bike traffic to be maintained. This approach requires a simple traffic management plan that can be implemented quickly. The main sidewalk also remains open for pedestrian thoroughfare which maintains access to other businesses.

- *Parking*

Parking on Bernard will be limited. However, stalls that are not utilized for expanded patios will remain available where possible; such as the parking stalls on the north side of the 300 block which has no restaurants. In some cases, in areas such as the 400 and 500 blocks, expanded patios and parking can co-exist by incorporating safety barricades. Furthermore, staff have identified alternate drop-off and pickup zones as well as areas for relocating accessible stalls.

- *Comparable opportunity*

With many businesses across the city dealing with provincial health orders, including those that limit indoor capacity, providing additional space through initiatives such as the Temporary Parking Lot Dining Program (the process for restaurants to convert their adjacent private land into outdoor dining space) allows businesses to maintain the viability of their operations and employment of staff. As businesses on Bernard Avenue don't often have adjacent private land to align with, the Sidewalk Seating Program that makes use of the public parking stalls and furnishing areas provides Bernard businesses with a comparable opportunity.

- *Meet me on Bernard Expectations*

Impact on the development of the 'Meet me on Bernard' program is lessened with this approach as it only incorporates space directly associated with the participating business. This is especially important in ensuring that staff can continue to implement solutions to challenges identified

through stakeholder consultation, such as drop-off's and deliveries, related to the full 'Meet me on Bernard' program scheduled to begin July 1st.

- *COVID-19 compliance*

With the significant rises in new daily COVID-19 cases, designating parking stalls will offer a safe and manageable space for expanded patios while not encouraging or increasing the opportunity for increased gatherings.

- *Quick implementation*

Since only a basic traffic management plan is required, staff will be able to implement this change quickly as infrastructure requirements are minimal and in current inventory. In addition, this setup will allow for regular operations such as street cleaning and waste management to continue within current budget. If endorsed by Council, staff are prepared to receive applications and setup infrastructure immediately.

Costs to implement this program will be minimal as the necessary infrastructure requirements (barricades) for the traffic management plan are basic and available in current inventory. Waste management of the expanded patio areas will be managed by the participating food retailers. It is not expected that the surrounding areas will require increased levels of waste management and is anticipated to be managed within current operations.

Conclusion:

Proposing the use of parking stalls and the sidewalk furnishing area directly in-front of participating establishments for the purpose of expanding outdoor patios is being recommended to further assist those businesses with current PHO restrictions in a safe and meaningful way until the full 'Meet me on Bernard' program can be implemented on July 1st.

Internal Circulation:

Active Living & Culture
Property Management
Parking
Transportation
Communications
Roadways

Considerations applicable to this report:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations: Costs for implementation and placement of barricades will be minimal and absorbed in operations. Fencing is a requirement of the business as per the Sidewalk Seating Program. Furthermore, when parking stalls are utilized/displaced within the sidewalk seating program, rental fees will be directed to the respective parking reserve to cover lost parking revenues.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Existing Policy:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Submitted by: Chris Babcock, Event Development Supervisor, Active Living & Culture

Approved for inclusion: Jim Gabriel, Divisional Director, Active Living & Culture

Attachments: PowerPoint: Bernard Avenue Sidewalk Seating Program