

# Report to Council



**Date:** April 25, 2022  
**To:** Council  
**From:** City Manager  
**Subject:** 2022 Meet Me on Bernard  
**Department:** Sport and Event Services Department

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT Council receive for information, the report from the Event Development Supervisor, dated April 25, 2022, regarding activities related to the 2022 Meet Me on Bernard program.

## **Purpose:**

To update Council on activities related to the 2022 Meet Me on Bernard program

## **Background:**

During the summer months of 2020, the 200-500 blocks of Bernard Avenue were closed to vehicular traffic and Kelowna's 'main street' was transformed into a public plaza that extended restaurant patios and expanded social space to allow pedestrians to safely enjoy downtown during ongoing provincial health orders. The participating businesses on the 200 and 300 blocks were pleased with the initiative whereas the businesses on the 400-500 blocks expressed concerns due to the lack of restaurants and animation that resulted in 'empty spaces', highlighting the need for additional programming.

In response to feedback from Bernard businesses, the public, and key stakeholders - animating the four blocks of Bernard Avenue became a primary focal point in 2021. Planning such activities was a challenging task as many potential contributors were hesitant to be involved given the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions. However, despite this challenge, a number of initiatives were able to be carried out that demonstrated a collaborative effort among key stakeholders that enhanced the vibrancy of the street. These initiatives included:

### *Animation*

- **Patio Extension Program:** A total of 23 restaurants took advantage of the patio extension program to expand capacity and give customers the opportunity to socialize and enjoy outside dining.

- **Beautification:** flowered planters and park benches were dispersed throughout the pedestrian corridor that supplemented existing hanging pots, trees, and rest stops.
- **Public art:** a total of seven pieces of augmented reality paintings, curated by the Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art, provided a creative escape for the public's viewing pleasure, while twelve decorated sono-tubes featuring inspirational expressions of recovery written by women in the NOW Canada program added to the aesthetics of the streetscape.
- **Parklets:** a total of seven parklets, designed and created by local landscape architect firms, provided innovative spaces for the public to visit, sit, and relax.
- **Entertainment:** a schedule of musical performers and acts, delivered by Festivals Kelowna and OK Collective, attracted residents and visitors to the downtown core to enjoy local talent while taking in the shops.
- **Activations and programs:** The weekly Farmers Market and other events and programs such as 'Arts on the Avenue', street games, and Tourism Kelowna's mobile visitor centre gave the public a variety of programmed options to engage in.
- **Indigenous Art Gallery:** the 'iArt' mobile gallery, sponsored by the Rotary Centre for the Arts and Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association, provided viewing of Indigenous art featuring artists from around the world such as Maureen Gruben (Inuvialuk), Christine Howard Sandoval (Obispeno Chumash & Hispanic) and Krista Belle Stewart (Syilx).

### *Operational Logistics*

- **Traffic Management:** a comprehensive traffic management plan that considered safety measures, accessible parking, educational signage, and transportation alternatives was implemented through the involvement of several City departments and external stakeholders.
- **Ambassadors:** regular presence by the DKA's Downtown On-Call team (DOC), Tourism Kelowna's mobile visitor centre, and a team of summer students helped educate the public and contributed to the overall safety of MMOB.
- **Marketing:** A combined promotional effort that included MMOB branding, signage, contests, and onsite ambassadors helped spread the word and further activated the MMOB program and more broadly, Kelowna's vibrant downtown.
- **Street Cleanliness:** Shared duties by City crews, DKA's Downtown Clean Team, and summer students contributed to the overall cleanliness, waste management, and COVID sanitizing measures throughout the program.

Unfortunately, provincial health orders, an extreme heat wave, and excessive smoke limited many of the activities that were able to occur during the 2021 MMOB season. Nonetheless, the program proceeded and was considered a success in terms of collaboration and deliverables under challenging circumstances.

### **Discussion:**

The MMOB committee, comprised of the Downtown Kelowna Association (DKA), Tourism Kelowna, and City staff, recognize that open spaces are important for physical, mental, and social health, and have combined resources to deliver a concept that will enhance the vibrancy of our downtown core and have a positive impact for local businesses.

## 2022 Meet Me on Bernard

In order to focus the various resources necessary to make the program a success and to maximize participation by retailers and other stakeholders, the 2022 Meet Me on Bernard program, including the patio extension program, is scheduled to run from July 1<sup>st</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup>. An earlier opening date for the patio extension program has been discussed however is not being pursued in 2022 based on lifted COVID restrictions, and challenging operational logistics and resources to deliver. 2023 plans will involve a comprehensive review of the MMOB program and will consider an earlier opening date option.

The key objective for the 2022 MMOB program will once again focus on animating the four blocks on Bernard Avenue and look to refine certain deliverables that will improve the overall experience and operations of the program. To help guide this objective, the MMOB committee endorsed the following core principles:

- encourage active healthy lifestyles
- build strong & vibrant neighbourhoods
- enhance social sustainability
- support local businesses and associations
- provide an inclusive and accessible atmosphere
- enhance cultural vitality

Building upon the feedback and successes of the 2021 program, the MMOB committee will introduce new initiatives, programs, and activations that will further contribute to the vibrancy, safety, and prosperity of the downtown core. Although 2021 was significantly impacted by external factors such as provincial health restrictions, high temperatures, and excessive smoke, the MMOB committee is cautiously optimistic that a robust event schedule can be implemented for 2022. Current plans include:

### *Animation & Activations*

- Patio Extension Program: currently, a total of 21 businesses have registered for the patio extension program to expand service and add vibrancy to the street.
- Farmers Market: The Kelowna Farmers & Crafters Market will be returning with their satellite market on the 400 & 500 blocks of Bernard Avenue every Sunday.
- Live Music: in addition to a wide range of buskers, Festivals Kelowna and OK Collective are scheduled to provide weekly performances from local talent that will attract residents to the area.
- Events: special events such as Arts on the Avenue, DKA Block Party, and opening & closing day festivities will offer residents more reasons to visit the downtown core.
- Community Programs: free drop-in programs such as 'Try it Tuesdays' and other weekly activations will offer people of all ages fun and educational experiences while shopping downtown.
- Pop-Up Businesses: space will be provided for businesses not located on Bernard Avenue to participate in the MMOB experience.
- Street games: building on the popularity of 2021, street games such as chess, giant checkers, and Jenga will be available for all who have that competitive spirit.

### *Furniture & Public Art*

- Parklets: parklets will once again adorn Bernard Avenue to provide visitors with a unique setting to visit and relax. Currently, there are eight landscape architect firms registered to show-off their innovative designs.
- Public Art: The Alternator for Contemporary Art is back on board to curate augmented reality pieces to provide a creative and extraordinary viewing experience that will add to the aesthetics of Bernard Avenue.
- Flowers & Benches: planters and benches will be strategically placed to enhance the beauty of Bernard Avenue while serving as attractive resting spots and doubling as traffic management infrastructure.
- Tables & Chairs: The 400 & 500 blocks will be furnished with a combination of Adirondack chairs and bistro sets for those who want to share a bite, visit, or have a game of chess.

### *Logistics*

- Parking & delivery zones: as part of the traffic management plan, considerations have been addressed to allow for the creation of delivery zones and to relocate all accessible parking stalls.
- Cleaning: a more collaborative approach has been taken to improve the cleanliness of MMOB through innovative practices and resource sharing.
- Communications: building upon a successful program from 2021, a redesigned signage program, dedicated website, and social media presence will better serve the public's informational needs.
- COVID planning: in the case of any unforeseen provincial health orders, the MMOB committee is prepared to adapt the program as needed to continue the delivery of the program.
- Safety: MMOB's safe and vibrant atmosphere will be bolstered through the services of the Downtown Kelowna's on-call team and student ambassadors. In addition, regular Event Services Committee members such as the RCMP and Bylaw Services will be engaged to help foster a positive social environment.

### Program Funding

Funding for the 2022 MMOB program will be cost shared between organizations of the committee and is anchored by the MMOB program budget (\$25K) and other revenues generated by several City of Kelowna sources, such as, the patio expansion program, temporary public art program, and contributing operational budgets. In addition, DKA and Tourism Kelowna provide substantial staff time and financial contributions through their own related budgets. Staff are also currently in the process of renewing and securing new sponsorship partners and alternate funding sources that are key to the successful delivery of the MMOB program.

**Conclusion:**

The Meet me on Bernard program is an initiative to stimulate local economic and social wellness through collaboration and innovation. The MMOB committee will continue to engage local businesses, community organizations, and the public to deliver a successful program that transforms Bernard Avenue from a vehicular corridor to an urban park, offering pedestrians a fun and vibrant setting to enjoy a variety of activities and to explore local shops and restaurants.

City staff will continue to monitor all aspects of the program and gather feedback from key stakeholders to support the ongoing success and sustainability of the Meet me on Bernard program.

**Internal Circulation:**

Active Living & Culture

Communications

Sponsorships & Advertising

**Considerations applicable to this report:**

**Existing Policy:** Council's 2019-2022 priorities identified focus areas supporting staff recommendations in this report, including:

- Vibrant Neighbourhoods
- Social & Inclusive
- Economic Resiliency
- Transportation & Mobility
- Community Safety

Additionally, the 'Meet me on Bernard' program aligns with key objectives of the Event Strategy Framework and other planning documents including the Kelowna Community Sport Plan, Cultural Plan, Community for All Action Plan and Journey Home Strategy.

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

**Legal/Statutory Authority:**

**Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:**

**Financial/Budgetary Considerations:**

**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