

Report to Council



Date: April 3, 2023
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: 2023 Meet me on Bernard
Department: Sport and Event Services Department

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive for information, the report from the Event Development Supervisor, dated April 3, 2023, regarding activities related to the 2023 Meet Me on Bernard program;

AND THAT Council approve an earlier opening date of the May long-weekend for the 200 block of the Meet me on Bernard program;

AND THAT Council approve an earlier opening date of the May long-weekend for patio extensions utilizing only parking stalls for those businesses on the 300-500 blocks wishing to participate.

Purpose:

To seek Council approval for the earlier opening date of the Meet me on Bernard program.

Background:

Since 2020, the 200-500 blocks of Bernard Avenue have been closed to vehicular traffic during the summer months as Kelowna's 'main street' has been transformed into a public plaza that extends restaurant patios and expands social space to allow pedestrians to safely enjoy downtown in a unique and safe manner. Initiatives contributing to the vibrancy, safety, and prosperity of the downtown core through Meet me on Bernard (MMOB) have included:

- Restaurant patio extensions
- Weekly farmers market
- Live music
- Special events
- Street games
- Pop-up opportunities for businesses
- Parklets and public art
- Neighbourhood-style settings

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 continue to combine resources to deliver a positive experience. The committee has continued the planning and development of MMOB since the conclusion of the 2022 season, focusing on creating a pedestrian corridor designed to celebrate community connections, promote active transportation, and create a safe and attractive destination for both residents and visitors.

Feedback from businesses, the public, and key contributors has been mainly positive over the past few years with highlights being the beautification of the street, event activations, and an inclusive and accessible atmosphere. To the contrary, some business owners cite reduced parking as a barrier to business and additional public feedback citing lack of shade, specifically on the north side of Bernard, as an inhibitor to prolonged visitation.

In 2022, Council directed staff to explore the merits and challenges of a potential earlier opening date and/or later closing date for the Meet me on Bernard Program.

Previous Council Resolution

Resolution	Date
THAT Council direct staff to explore the merits and challenges of a potential earlier opening date and/or later closing date for the 2023 Meet me on Bernard Program and report back to Council before the end of Q1 2023.	April 25, 2022

Discussion:

When exploring the possibility of a potential earlier opening date and/or later closing date for the Meet me on Bernard program, staff met with internal and external stakeholders to explore opportunities. The following considerations were identified and reviewed:

- Operational resources: operationally, street cleaning and waste management resources would be available for an extended MMOB program through the combination of City and DKA efforts.
- Staffing: at this time, staff resources that are required for event support, setup and takedown of equipment, which was previously resourced through summer student programs, would not be available outside of the summer months. However, an earlier or later timeframe focused solely on the 200 block would not require a high level of staffing support due to the space being occupied by patio extensions only and the limited animation required.
- Business support: overall, business owners on the 200 block are favorable to an earlier and later timeframe to participate in an extended MMOB program.
- Ability to animate (physical infrastructure and events): on-street furnishings, such as public art, parklets, and special events that have been features of MMOB in previous years, would not be available until the summer months. Due to the logistics of the patio extensions on the 200 block, these types of infrastructure and activities are not typically located in this area.
- Transit: as in previous years, there are no issues with existing transit schedules as any affected routes would be detoured.
- Parking: an extended MMOB program would have an additional impact on downtown parking capacity (approximately 25-30 stalls), although there would not be a loss of accessible stalls as those would be relocated.

Conclusion:

Based on discussions with program partners, participating staff, and business engagement, the MMOB committee is proposing an earlier program implementation and vehicular traffic closure for the 200 block only, with an option for those businesses on the 300-500 blocks to expand into the adjacent parking stall only. The proposed program would target a May long-weekend opening with the full, regular implementation of the MMOB program (200-500 blocks) beginning July 1. The MMOB committee recommends the MMOB program to end on the traditional date of the September long-weekend to allow for the proper assessment and to fully understand the impacts of an earlier implementation before exploring any further extensions.

This proposal would accommodate the large concentration and enthusiasm of restaurants on the 200 block as well as those businesses on the 300-500 blocks who have expressed interest. The whole MMOB program would be scheduled to end after the September long-weekend.

Internal Circulation:

Active Living & Culture
Communications
Sponsorships & Advertising

Considerations applicable to this report:

Existing Policy: Council's 2023-2026 priorities identified focus areas supporting staff recommendations in this report, including:

- Crime & Safety: providing local Business Improvement Areas support for urban centre safety issues.
- Transportation: Creating more trips by alternative transportation modes

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

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

cc: D. Nicholas, Sport & Event Services Manager