



# City of Huntington Beach

**File #:** 21-100

**MEETING DATE:** 2/16/2021

## REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

**SUBMITTED TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**SUBMITTED BY:** Oliver Chi, City Manager

**PREPARED BY:** Ursula Luna-Reynosa, Director of Community Development

**Subject:**

**Consider an Extension of the Temporary Closure of the Second Block of Main Street to Vehicular Traffic Through Labor Day (September 6, 2021); Authorize Staff to Engage an Urban Design Firm; and, Appoint the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and a City Council Member to Serve on an Ad Hoc Downtown Urban Design Study Committee**

**Statement of Issue:**

On December 21, 2020, the City Council considered a request from the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) to extend the temporary closure of the second and third blocks of Main Street to vehicular traffic through Labor Day (September 6, 2021) to allow downtown businesses the opportunity to continue operating outdoors to meet physical distancing requirements in a safe manner during the COVID-19 pandemic. At that meeting, Council Members discussed the differences between the second and third blocks of Main Street, including the lower number of third block businesses using the outdoor space, and the lower level of support among affected third block businesses for extending the street closure.

Ultimately, after substantive deliberation, the City Council directed staff to reopen the third block to vehicular traffic, extended the closure of the second block to February 28, 2021, and requested that the issue related to opening / closing the second block of Main Street be reagendaized for consideration on February 16, 2021 (Attachment 1).

The temporary closure of Main Street has resulted in robust discussions that warrants further study for informed discussions about future place making opportunities and better connection to the southern portion of the Downtown as defined in the Downtown Specific Plan.

**Financial Impact:**

There are no direct costs to the City if the City Council is to extend the temporary closure. If the closure does result in increased sales to the businesses then there would be a nominal positive, corresponding fiscal impact to the City's General Fund via sales tax revenue. The cost of an urban design study will be within the parameters of the existing budget and the award of any agreement will

follow the City's established procurement procedures.

**Recommended Action:**

- A) Authorize the City Manager to continue the temporary closure of the second block of Main Street to vehicular traffic to accommodate outdoor dining and retail in the public right-of-way through September 6, 2021; and,
- B) Authorize staff to engage an Urban Design Firm; and,
- C) Establish an Ad Hoc Downtown Urban Design Study Committee; and,
- D) Appoint the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and a City Council Member to the Ad Hoc Committee.

**Alternative Action(s):**

Provide alternative direction.

**Analysis:**

Staff has confirmed that the BID maintains its request that the City Council extend the closure of the second block of Main Street through Labor Day. If approved, this extension would give merchants certainty that this additional outdoor space will remain available through the pandemic in this otherwise highly uncertain time. According to the BID, there is broad support among second block businesses and property owners for this extension.

The City has been able to pilot the closure of the second block of Main Street during the pandemic. Anecdotal information has indicated positive sales for the second block businesses, particularly restaurateurs, due to the ability to add or increase outdoor dining opportunities. This inferred success has led to interest in further studying Main Street, particularly the second block, for future place making and outdoor dining opportunities. The addition of street side dining has added liveliness and interest to downtown and the ability to imagine an enhanced physical environment that could be even more inviting.

Further, there has long been interest in enhancing the connectivity between the resorts, Pacific City, downtown and the pier. A concept was prepared for the City by RSM Design and was included with the City Council packet at the December 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. This study particularly focused on the connection via Walnut. Further refinement of this concept, with additional study of potential PCH improvements, is necessary prior to being able to design and estimate costs for implementation.

Staff has solicited proposals from three urban design firms. Staff is seeking direction from the City Council to move forward with a Downtown Urban Design Study. The scope of work includes:

- An assessment of existing conditions and review of previous reports and studies
- Potential streetscape configurations of Main Street
- Downtown connectivity strategies
- A feedback loop to provide input on Main Street configurations and connectivity strategies
- A final refinement of two concept configurations and two strategies (based on feedback)

received) to be presented to the City Council.

Staff requests that the City Council establish the Ad Hoc Downtown Urban Design Study Committee and appoint the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and a member of the City Council to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee. This Ad Hoc Committee will also work to engage community representatives to assist with the overall assessment. It is envisioned that the Ad Hoc Committee will then participate with staff and the consultant in the feedback loop component of the above-described scope of work. Staff from Community Development, Public Works, and Community Services will provide technical support to the Ad Hoc Committee, with Community Development staff being the main liaison in coordinating meetings and managing the agreement with the Urban Design firm.

At the conclusion of this effort, and within 4 months of execution of an agreement with an Urban Design firm, two Main Street streetscape configurations and two downtown connectivity strategies will be presented to the City Council for consideration. Staff will also provide an order of magnitude cost estimate to implement each concept. Should the City Council desire to move forward with possible implementation, staff will engage in a robust community engagement process that will include small group stakeholder meetings and a virtual open house to further refine and assist selection in final configurations and plans. Should the City Council desire to proceed with implementation, staff would then request approval to engage services for design documents and allocation of funds. At the time of such consideration, any necessary environmental analysis will be conducted.

**Environmental Status:**

The project is exempt pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15304(e) because the proposed project consists of a minor temporary use having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment. The proposed project would not have a negative effect on biologically sensitive resources, and there is no evidence of any unusual environmental circumstances that might give rise to a reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

**Strategic Plan Goal:**

Non-Applicable - Administrative Item

**Attachment(s):**

1. December 21, 2020 RCA