



City of Huntington Beach

File #: 21-619

MEETING DATE: 9/7/2021

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 the End of the Calendar Year (December 31, 2021)

Statement of Issue:

On February 16, 2021, the City Council approved a request from the Huntington Beach Downtown Business Improvement District (HBDBID) to extend the temporary closure of the second block 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, the City Council also authorized staff to engage an urban design firm to further study Main Street for future placemaking and outdoor dining opportunities, as well as the establishment of an Ad Hoc Downtown Urban Design Study Committee. Of note, at that time, the third block of Main Street was reconfigured to allow for both outdoor dining and the reopening of vehicular traffic.

Businesses are facing significant continued uncertainty with an uptick in COVID cases over the summer, and some safety restrictions have been re-imposed instead of fully lifted. Therefore, staff is recommending that the City Council authorize the second block of Main Street to remain closed to vehicular traffic through the end of the 2021 calendar year so that local residents and visitors can continue to take advantage of expanded outdoor dining and retail opportunities.

Financial Impact:

There are no direct costs to the City if the City Council is to extend the temporary closure. If there are increased sales to the businesses, then there would be a nominal, corresponding positive fiscal impact to the City's General Fund via sales tax revenue.

Recommended Action:

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

December 31, 2021.

Alternative Action(s):

Do not authorize an extension of the temporary street closure and direct that Main Street reopen to vehicular traffic, or provide alternative direction regarding the opening and / or closing of Main Street in the City's downtown core.

Analysis:

Staff has confirmed that the HBDBID maintains its request that the City Council extend the second block of Main Street closure through the end of the 2021 calendar year. Given the ongoing uncertainty with the Delta variant and the increase in COVID cases throughout Southern California, the extended closure of the second block would allow businesses the opportunity to meet safe physical distancing requirements and give merchants and patrons certainty that this additional outdoor space will remain available. According to the HBDBID, there is broad support among second block businesses and property owners for this extension.

Since July 6, 2020, the City has been able to pilot the closure of the second block of Main Street, which has indicated positive sales, particularly from restaurateurs in response to increased outdoor dining. This inferred success and enhanced pedestrian/family-friendly environment led to an interest in further studying Main Street, particularly the second block, for future placemaking and outdoor dining opportunities. The expansion of outdoor dining areas and increased pedestrian zones have added liveliness and interest to downtown and a desire to imagine potential permanent improvements. Additionally, there has long been interest in enhancing the connectivity between the resorts, Pacific City, downtown, and the pier as defined in the Downtown Specific Plan.

The City hired Studio One Eleven to refine further a concept developed by RSM Design which focused on the downtown connection via Walnut. The scope of the current Downtown Urban Design Study, as described below, includes an additional study of potential PCH improvements.

- An assessment of existing conditions and review of previous reports and studies;
- Potential streetscape configurations of Main Street which includes options for the first, second and third blocks;
- Downtown connectivity strategies;
- A feedback loop to provide input on Main Street configurations and connectivity strategies; and,
- A final refinement of two concept configurations and connectivity strategies (based on feedback received) to be presented to the City Council.

The Ad Hoc Downtown Urban Design Study Committee includes Mayor Carr, Mayor Pro Tem Delgleize, and Council Member Moser, who have participated with staff (City Manager's Office, Community Development, and Public Works) and the consultant to provide feedback on the above-described scope of work. The Ad Hoc Committee will engage community representatives to solicit feedback regarding the two concept configurations and connectivity strategies. This public engagement will commence in late September/ early October.

After soliciting public engagement, staff plans to return to the City Council for further consideration of long term updates related to improving connectivity within the broader downtown resort district.

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:

Economic Development & Housing

Attachment(s):

1. December 21, 2020 RCA
2. February 16, 2021 RCA
3. Request from the HBDBID