

## COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

### 4. Prioritizing Commercial Drive as a Pedestrian-First High Street

Submitted by: Councillors Fry and De Genova

#### WHEREAS

1. Commercial Drive from Venables to Broadway is known for its authentic and unique character; with its Continental vibe, important community and heritage significance, eclectic and artistic inclination, and vibrant small business and gastronomic disposition, 'The Drive' is where cultures meet to shop, eat and socialize;
2. The Drive is one of Vancouver's oldest roadways. Once a logging skid road, later an interurban streetcar line; Commercial Drive retains some anachronistic road geometry, notably, it is wider south and narrower north of 1st Avenue;
3. Today, The Drive serves as a high street for the Grandview-Woodland neighbourhood and a commercial destination for the region. With its lively granular streetscape of smaller shops and services, The Drive is first and foremost an accessible, pedestrian-friendly street;
4. The Grandview-Woodland Community Plan<sup>1</sup>, approved by Council in 2016, variously calls for:
  - a. Preserving the heart and soul of the community, the independent and eclectic nature of The Drive;
  - b. Renewing, improving and expanding public spaces, placemaking, and opportunities for social and cultural amenities, and critical infrastructure;
  - c. Developing a vision for Commercial Drive as a complete street, with key design principles that could include:
    - i. Providing direct and convenient access to shops and services for all modes of transportation;
    - ii. Safety and comfort for all modes, with a focus on people walking and cycling;
    - iii. Carefully considering impacts to transit, general traffic, nearby streets, parking, services and deliveries, pick-ups and drop-offs, and viability of local businesses;
    - iv. Considering flexible design approaches that facilitate special events; and

- v. Exploring opportunities to integrate sustainable rainwater management techniques.

The Plan explicitly does not propose a conceptual design but prescribes community consultation prior to any project consideration by Council;

5. Tactical urbanism and placemaking initiatives like VIVA Vancouver and the City of Vancouver Places for People<sup>2</sup> program champion an approach to public space planning, design, and stewardship in the City that is grounded in an evidence-based understanding of public life, and in response to increasing urban density, puts people's experience and use of the public realm at the forefront of public space design and decision-making. The intent: to address affordability and smaller living spaces, loneliness and weak social networks, connections and accessibility, and vibrant and dynamic public life with everyday experiences, events and activities that serve all people;
6. In response to 2019 motions supporting Slower Safer Streets and Safer Routes to Schools, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Vancouver has adopted a Making Streets for People<sup>3</sup> program, which aligns with the City's long-standing commitment to VisionZero and supports Pop-Up Plazas, the Expedited Patio Program and Slow Streets;
7. Creating a safe, accessible, and enjoyable walking environment is Vancouver's top priority<sup>4</sup>. More comfortable, safer and accessible walking for people of all ages and abilities and a pedestrians-first model are championed by various city policies and public bodies like the Seniors' Advisory and Persons with Disabilities Committees;
8. The City of Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy<sup>5</sup> articulates a number of long-term goals for the physical and mental well-being of the City and its people, including: Active living and getting outside; Getting around; Cultivating connections; Expressing ourselves; Environments to thrive in; and Making ends meet and working well;
9. Vancouver's Climate Emergency Action Plan<sup>6</sup> Big Move #1 articulates support for walkable, complete neighbourhoods "Planning for more residents to be within walking distance of their daily needs through land use changes is fundamental to the success of the plan. This enables more people to walk or roll to access their local needs and to rely on vehicles less";
10. The City of Vancouver officially designated eight blocks of Commercial Drive between East 4th Avenue and Charles Street as "Historic Little Italy<sup>7</sup>" in 2016. In 2019, Council approved a motion titled Celebrating Italian Culture<sup>8</sup>: Welcome Signage in Little Italy and a Pilot Program for an Italian Piazza. The resolution further seeks opportunities for local artisans, restaurateurs, proprietors and vendors to support outdoor activations and events on The Drive;

11. In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the City's Moving Vancouver Forward: Economic and community recovery strategy<sup>9</sup> has highlighted repurposing public spaces for gathering spaces and recreation, making streets for people, and repurposing public and private space to allow for more patio spaces for businesses as important recovery initiatives;
12. The Commercial Drive BIA, with support and research involving the community and local businesses have published a vision for Pedestrian First Commercial High Street<sup>10</sup>. This Pedestrian First Vision is for The Drive to evolve into a more pedestrian-friendly street, vibrant, accessible and, first and foremost, walkable while at the same time supporting business viability so that it remains a highly desirable local and regional commercial destination.

This vision includes:

- a. Slowing the street, with a priority around sharing the street for all users and not promoting The Drive as a traffic connector/corridor;
- b. Widening sidewalks and enhancing crosswalks for pedestrians, including seniors and the mobility-challenged;
- c. Promoting a “stop & shop” model for all modes of transportation including walking, rolling, cycling, public transit, and private vehicles;
- d. Recognizing the urgent need to create room including more linear space for safe physical distancing while walking, cycling, and shopping, as well as supporting outside dining and vending;
- e. Enhancing the public realm and streetscape with seating, landscaping, pedestrian lighting, street furniture, plazas and piazzas, bike racks, decorative cross walks, public art, and placemaking;
- f. Working with the BIA, City, and local artists to support public art and painted intersections that celebrate and pay tribute to the vibrant cultures and peoples who make up the heartbeat and history of the Drive, including Italian, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities;
- g. Enhance secure bike locking infrastructure, incorporating bike docking stations on parallel side streets;
- h. Maintaining and improving East-West bike connections to compliment existing nearby bike lane networks at Woodland, Lakewood, East 10th Avenue and the Central Valley Greenway as well as potential new separated bike lane on Victoria Drive;

- i. Maintaining and improving on-street parking spaces to support local businesses;
  - j. Reduce number of travel lanes south of 1st Avenue, adjusting travel lanes, parking, and parklets so that they are consistent along The Drive;
  - k. Request Council prioritize Commercial as “Pedestrian First Commercial High Street.”; and
13. With the opportunity for a European style street (in Italy and some other Mediterranean countries, a corso is a social promenade, a place for strolling and shopping, especially in a public place for pleasure or display) that promotes shared access, enhanced public realm and a vibrant, sustainable local and regional economy supporting the “stop & shop” model; The Drive BIA vision aligns with City priorities of slower, safer streets and healthy, complete communities, and economic and community recovery strategies.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council supports the vision for prioritizing Commercial Drive as Pedestrian First Commercial High Street, specifically:
  - a. A slow street, shared by all users that supports a stop and shop model instead of a connector role;
  - b. Widened sidewalks and enhanced crosswalks;
  - c. Space for physical distancing while walking, cycling and shopping that also supports outside dining and vending;
  - d. Support for community-led public art and placemaking;
  - e. Enhanced bike locking infrastructure, and enhanced east-west bike route connections, with bike share docking stations on side streets;
  - f. Reducing the number of travel lanes south of 1st Avenue to create a consistent road geometry; and
  - g. Maintaining and improving on-street parking to support local businesses.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back on how this vision can be implemented, phased and incorporated as part of any Victoria Drive/Commercial Drive upgrades, street and traffic work, and directions including but not limited to implementation of the Grandview Woodland Community Plan, Vancouver plan, Making Streets for People program, Transportation 2040, Climate Emergency Action Plan, Healthy City Strategy, Culture|Shift strategy, Celebrating Italian Culture, and Moving

Vancouver Forward: Economic and Community Recovery Strategy.

- C. THAT Council direct staff to share support for this vision and direction with the Commercial Drive BIA, Britannia Community Services Centre, Grandview Woodland Area Council, Vancouver Seniors' Advisory Committee, Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, Vancouver Transportation Advisory Committee, Italian Day Festival Society, Italian Cultural Centre, Translink, and MOBI Bike Share.

## LINKS

1. Grandview Woodland Community Plan  
<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/grandview-woodland-community-plan.pdf>
2. Downtown Public Space Strategy: Places for People  
<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/downtown-public-space-strategy.pdf>
3. Making Streets for People Program  
<https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/making-streets-for-people-program.aspx>
4. Walking in Vancouver  
<https://vancouver.ca/streets-transportation/walking.aspx>
5. City of Vancouver Healthy City Strategy  
<https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/healthy-city-strategy.aspx>
6. Climate Emergency Action Plan: How We Move  
<https://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/how-we-move.aspx>
7. Expediting the Official Designation of “Little Italy”  
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20160406/documents/pspc9.pdf>
8. Celebrating Italian Culture: Welcome Signage in Little Italy and a Pilot Program for an Italian Piazza in Vancouver  
<https://council.vancouver.ca/20190626/documents/cfsc11.pdf>
9. Moving Vancouver Forward: Economic and community recovery strategy  
<https://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/covid-19-moving-vancouver-forward-economic-and-community-recovery.aspx>
10. A Pedestrian First Commercial High Street Vision for The Drive  
<https://thedrive.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/CommercialDrivePedestrianFirstHighStreet.pdf>