

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

4. **A People-Focused Gastown: A Bold, Forward-Looking Vision for a Vibrant and Prosperous Neighbourhood**

Submitted by: Councillor Kirby-Yung

WHEREAS

1. Gastown is the birthplace of our city, located within the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-waututh First Nations. It is a beloved historic destination for locals and visitors alike;
2. Gastown is Vancouver's oldest commercial district, becoming a booming hub following the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1886. Many of the current structures were built in the 1890s and are now preserved as heritage buildings;
3. Historically Gastown has been at the centre of many of the city's defining moments, such as the Great Fire of 1886 when First Nations paddled across the Burrard Inlet to help rescue people from the fire. The fire on June 13, 1886 largely destroyed the city, but it also created an opportunity to rebuild anew;
4. The Gastown area has long been a diverse and vibrant neighbourhood. However, the streets of Gastown have been in need of major repair and rehabilitation for some time and have now deteriorated to a state of critical disrepair;
5. Planning and engagement processes have been ongoing over the course of many years to explore how Gastown might be made an even better place for people. For example, the Imagine Gastown Streets – Phase One Engagement Summary 2017-2018;
6. Likewise, the Gastown Complete Streets Project outlined various goals and a planning process, building in part from the Transportation 2040 plan and Downtown Eastside Plan. The Complete Streets project notably identified four key goals:
 - Celebrate and acknowledge Gastown's complex history and work towards reconciliation
 - Explore Vancouver's first car-light area
 - Address a major gap in the all ages and abilities cycling network
 - Enhance transit service for buses and future streetcar;
7. And most recently, the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS) released an Urban Design Study in March 2020 to provide insight into how public realm changes may affect Gastown business members, workers, residents, and visitors alike and highlight community priorities for focused action. Community feedback from the study included suggestions for more programming such as art

exhibitions and farmers markets, jazz festivals and chalk-art festivals, public seating, a First Nations monument, covered meeting spaces and patios, art in a variety of styles from First Nations and local artists reflective of the industrial history of the neighbourhood, as well as a desire to keep with the historic vibe of the neighbourhood; <https://gastown.org/tomorrow/>

8. In the 2023-26 Capital Plan, Council identified Gastown Streets as a priority and approved \$10 million in funding to support enhanced Host Nations visibility, immediate repairs and improvements in Gastown, and the planning and design process to guide the renewal of Water Street and Maple Tree Square as Phase 1; ⁱ
 - Specifically, it was moved as an amendment at the 2023-2026 Capital Plan Special Council Meeting on Wednesday, June 29, 2022 (by Councillor Kirby-Yung and seconded by Councillor Dominato): *“THAT Council add \$3 million to the Capital Budget for the Gastown/Water Street project from emerging priorities funding, with overall funding increasing from \$7 million to \$10 million, to advance additional targeted sidewalk repairs and projects to enhance public realm in Gastown including visibility of Host Nations.”*

CARRIED (Vote No. 08621)

9. Additionally, at the Special Council meeting on June 29, 2022, on the 2023-26 Capital Plan, consistent with the identification of Gastown and Water Street as a core infrastructure major renewal project and the motion to more quickly address the significant degradation of the street and public realm in this historic neighbourhood and the bigger overall project funding requirements, it was determined that the Capital Plan Mid-term Update in 2024 provides the opportunity to allocate funding to advance construction as Phase 2 (estimated at \$13M) and that the remainder of the work (estimated at \$15M) could be included in the 2027-30 Capital Plan;
10. In terms of planning for the major repair and rehabilitation the Gastown’s streets, Council has received updates from staff advising on work with the Gastown BIA and other stakeholders, including identifying alternatives for immediate repairs and improvements in the neighbourhood;
11. More specifically, staff have advised that they have been developing a work program for Gastown, and have made advances on some components such as priority sidewalk repairs that began in 2022 and continue in 2023. Blood Alley Square construction is also well underway and some restoration work for Trounce Alley is scheduled for 2024; and
12. Staff have nevertheless identified that there is a gap in Council direction for the long-term vision for Gastown Streets and public space, and that given the recognition that the streets are in need of major repair and rehabilitation, and as that planning and engagement processes that have been ongoing over the course of many years to explore how Gastown might be made an even better place for people, it is incumbent on Council to provide staff with direction on the

long-term vision for Gastown to help guide planning and investment in the area and to move forward with revitalizing this historic and valued neighbourhood.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to proceed immediately with urgently needed patching repairs and improvements to Water Street to address known deficiencies and safety hazards and that staff not proceed with a larger asphalt treatment plan at this time to be funded from the existing current Capital Plan allocation.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to initiate, as quickly as possible, a streets and public realm planning and design process for Gastown that brings in an external urban place-making lens and expertise to the Gastown planning and engagement process(es) toward a bold vision to pedestrianize Water Street and make it car-free or car-light either on a seasonal or year-round basis, with the overarching goal being a more vibrant, people-friendly destination and the enabling of ongoing activations including patios, music, events, festivals and active transportation opportunities.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to seek to work with the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS) to pilot a car-free shut down of Water Street during a month or on select weekends in the summer of 2023 and/or in summer 2024, as desired by and in partnership with the GBIS and other Gastown stakeholders.
- D. THAT staff planning efforts for Gastown shall include bringing potential strategic directions to Council by the end of Q2 2024 with options to restore and expand the irreplaceable public realm of this historic neighbourhood and enhance it as a vibrant, people-friendly place.
- E. THAT Council acknowledge the longer-term potential of changing the configuration of Cordova Street from a one-way to a two-way street from the Powell Street Overpass to Waterfront Station to support traffic flow in the area, and to complement a more pedestrian-friendly Gastown;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to seek to engage with TransLink on related bus infrastructure needs and requirements and report back to Council with high-level considerations for a shift to a two-way street by the end of Q3 of 2023.

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ⁱ 2023-2026 Capital Plan – Special Council Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, June 29, 2022. AMENDMENT MOVED by Councillor Kirby-Yung and SECONDED by Councillor Dominato: “*THAT Council add \$3 million to the Capital Budget for the Gastown/Water Street project from emerging priorities funding, with overall funding increasing from \$7 million to \$10 million, to advance additional targeted sidewalk repairs and projects to enhance public realm in Gastown including visibility of Host Nations.*” CARRIED (Vote No. 08621) (Councillors Boyle, Carr, Swanson, and Mayor Stewart opposed) (Councillor Hardwick absent for the vote) <https://council.vancouver.ca/20220629/documents/spec20220629min.pdf>

AMENDMENT MOVED by Councillor Kirby-Yung SECONDED by Councillor Dominato: “*THAT the following be added as F: THAT Council acknowledges the critical nature of the Gastown and*

Water Street Rehabilitation work, and that the full scope of that work is currently projected at approximately \$35 million, which leaves a funding gap” and

“FURTHER THAT the following be added as G: *THAT Council direct staff to report back to Council on the opportunity to accelerate the larger-scale Gastown and Water Street Rehabilitation project delivery through the addition or reallocation of funding in the Capital Plan Midterm Update in 2024.*” CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (Vote No. 08622)

<https://council.vancouver.ca/20220629/documents/spec20220629min.pdf>
