



GASTOWN

SUMMER 2024 WATER STREET PEDESTRIAN ZONE PILOT

FEBRUARY 7, 2024



Agenda

1 Purpose

2 Work to Date

3 What We Heard

4 Recommended Approach to Summer 2024 Pilot

5 Planning for Summer 2024 Pilot

6 Milestones

Purpose: to seek council direction on the 2024 pilot

- A. THAT Council direct staff to proceed with a pedestrian-first pilot on Water Street in July and August as generally outlined in Appendix B;
- B. THAT Council direct staff to report back in fall 2024 on pilot outcomes and how they will inform the Gastown Public Spaces Plan and the approach to future city programs, including seasonal pedestrian-first streets.

Council Direction

May 10, 2023 Motion

Council directed staff to:

- Continue with **immediate road repairs**
- Work with the Gastown Business Improvement Society (GBIS) to **pilot a car-free Water Street**
- Initiate **a streets and public realm planning and design process** for Gastown
- Work towards **a bold vision to pedestrianize Water Street** supporting a more vibrant, people-friendly destination
- Explore potential longer-term configuration of **Cordova Street from a one-way to a two-way street**



Work To Date

1. Near-term repairs and improvements:

- ✓ Selection of sidewalk repairs completed in 2023; more planned in 2024
- ✓ Trounce Alley rehabilitation in Spring 2025
- ✓ Interim Maple Tree Square paver repairs in March 2024
- ✓ Blood Alley Square open to public

2. Phase 1 of Gastown Public Spaces Plan:

- ✓ Deepening relationships with Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations
- ✓ Collecting community feedback and continuing discussions with partner organizations
- ✓ Advancing public space and transportation analyses
- ✓ Selecting a consultant to bring an external expertise on urban placemaking

3. Preparations for Summer 2024 Pilot underway



Phase 1 Engagement

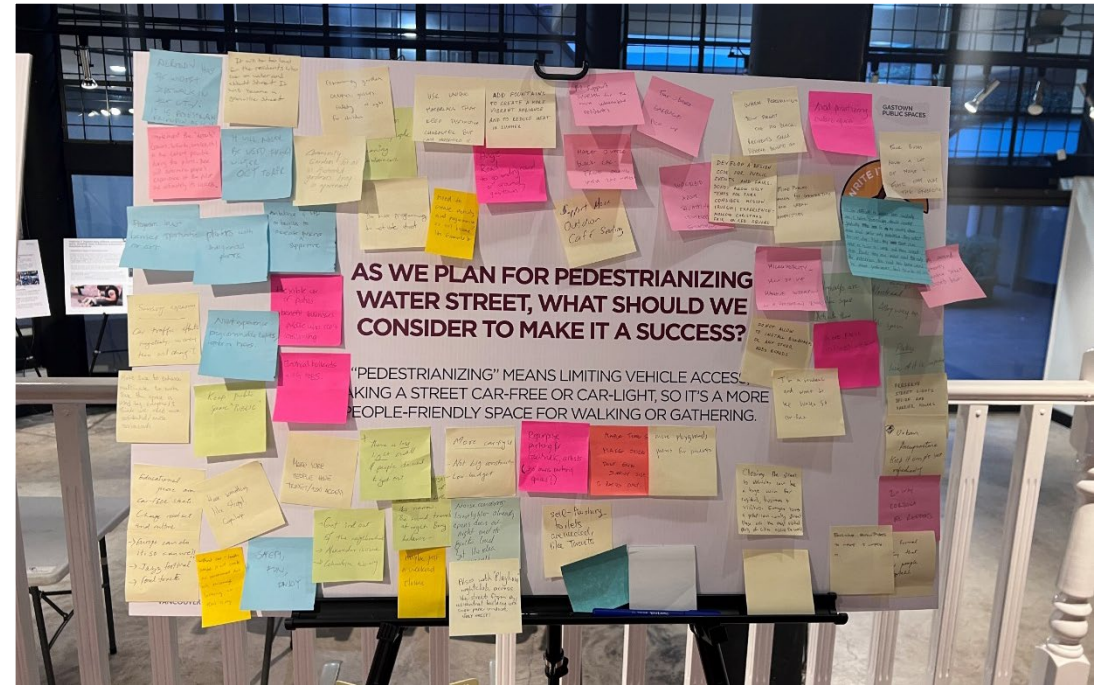
- **2300+** community survey responses
- **800+** visitors at public events
- **35+** meetings with stakeholders
- **5** in-person sessions at community gathering spaces
- **10+** presentations to Civic Advisory Committees

A full summary of Phase 1 of public engagement for the Gastown Public Spaces Plan will be available online in February 2024.



Focused Business Conversations

- **35 business survey responses** from Gastown businesses and property owners to better understand loading, street access and street use needs.
- **18 one-on-one meetings** with Gastown businesses and property owners in coordination with Gastown Business Improvement Society.
- **80+ businesses visited** along Water Street and Maple Tree Square to share project information.



What We've Heard:

There was **enthusiasm in the community about a pedestrian-first Water Street** with many ideas referencing pedestrian streets from other countries.

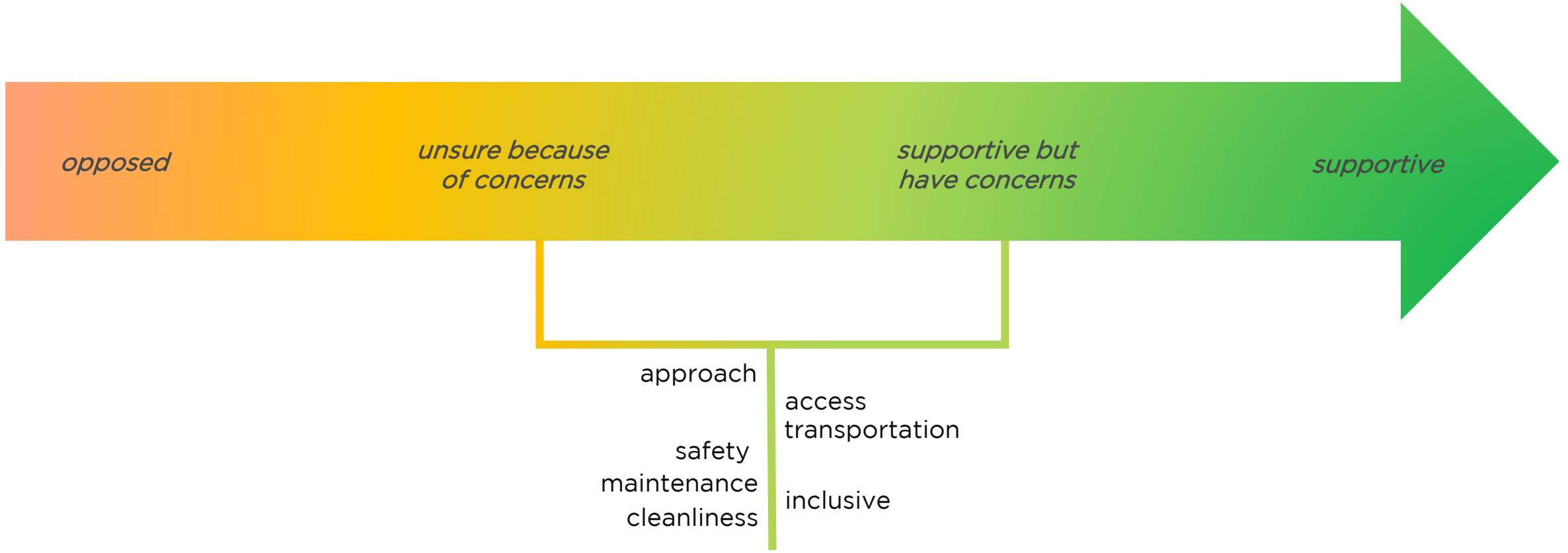
Staff heard interest in:

- Creating more **vibrant public spaces** to socialize and gather
- Providing more space for people to **walk comfortably at busy times**
- Supporting **opportunities for local businesses and culture**
- Supporting **events, celebrations** and other **programming**
- Supporting public life with **seating and amenities**
- Supporting a **range of community needs**



Spectrum of Perspectives

On A Pedestrian-first Water Street



We like the idea, if...

Concerns and Considerations

We also heard concerns around:

- **How would a pedestrianized street work in Gastown**
- Potential impacts of changes to the **transportation network**
- Business **loading and access**, tour bus pick-up and drop-off
- **Cleanliness** and sense of **safety**
- Challenges of realizing **inclusive public spaces**
- **Diverse opinions on the level of investment**
e.g., some felt Gastown has adequate facilities and that resources should be diverted to housing or did not support walking and public space investment in general



Pilot as Opportunity to Test

- **One approach to a pedestrian-first Water Street**, building from previous work and public feedback
- **Impacts to roadway network**
- **Permitting changes** to better support local businesses and community organizations to use the street
- **City services and supports**, as well as **community collaborations**, that may be needed to keep the area clean, welcoming and safe



Recommended Approach

Water Street 2024 Pedestrian Zone Pilot

Recommended Pilot Approach

Overview

EXTENT & ACCESS

- **Two car-free blocks**, with the opportunity to close all of Water Street on select days or weekends
- **Traffic management changes** to support neighbourhood access, Cordova to remain one-way

TIMING & DURATION

- Coordinated to follow construction in Maple Tree Square for interim paver repairs
- Two months in July and August

STREET USE, PROGRAMMING & SANITATION

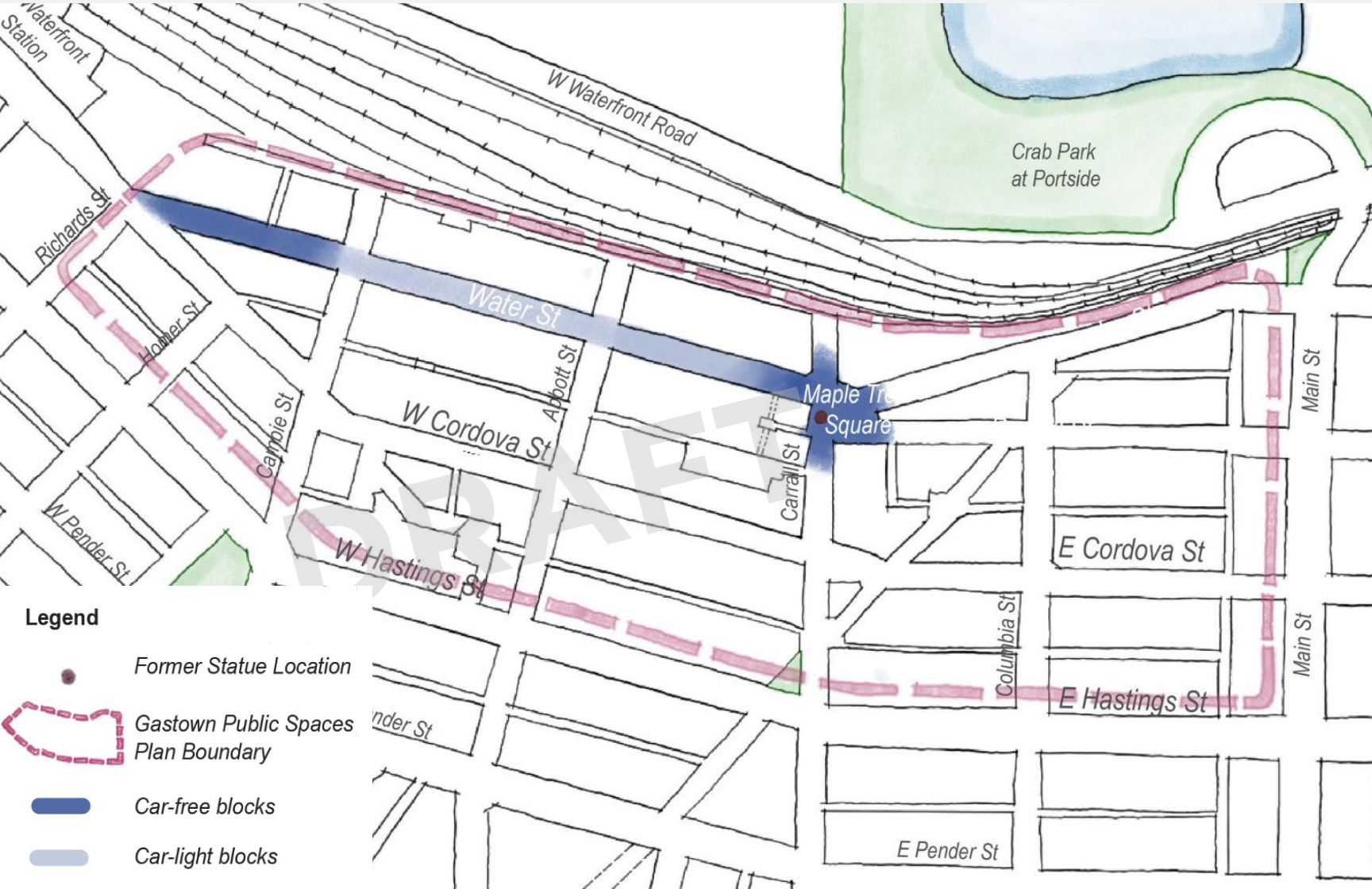
- **Permit changes to support business and community use** of street space
- Additional **seating, programming and activations**
- Enhanced approach to **cleanliness and safety**



Water Street Pedestrian Zone

Extent

Bookend Car-free: Permanent or flexible activations + Car-light mid-blocks

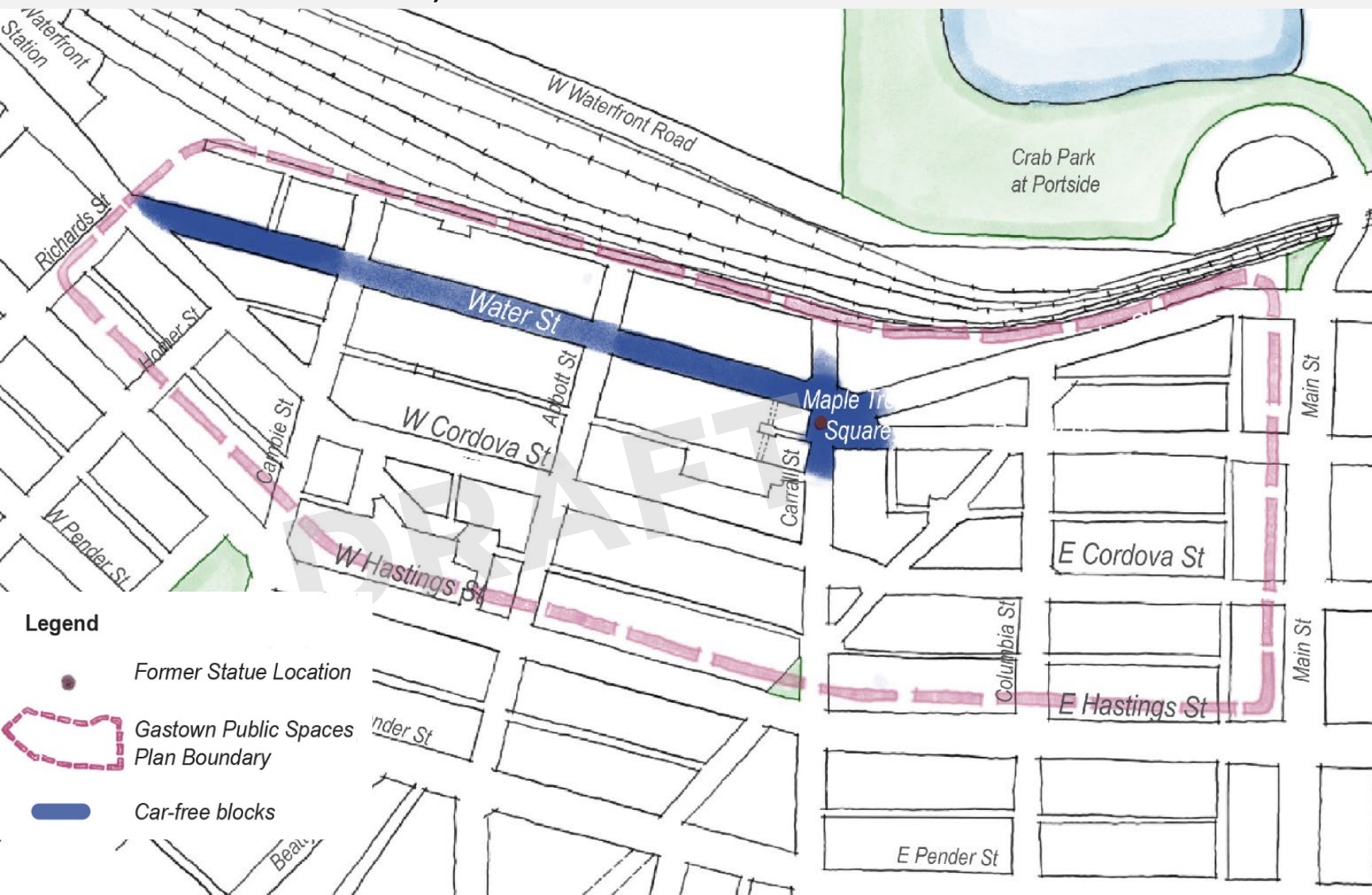


Water Street Pedestrian Zone

Extent



Events/Select Weekend: Car-free Water Street



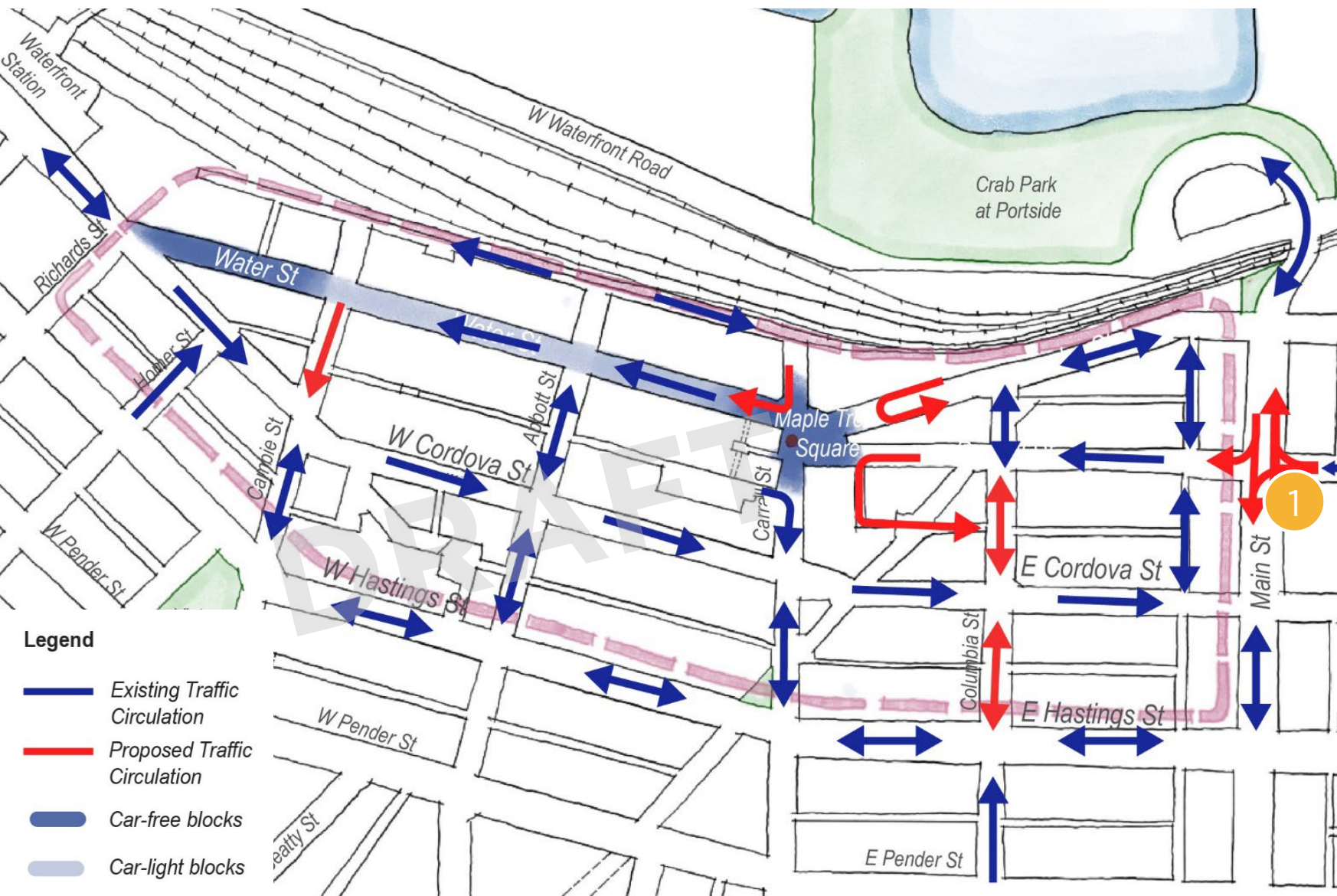
- Legend**
- Former Statue Location
 - Gastown Public Spaces Plan Boundary
 - Car-free blocks

Partners Based Programming



Traffic Management Plan

Supporting Neighbourhood Access



1

- Signal and laning changes on Powell St at Main St to divert traffic, while retaining access to neighbourhood

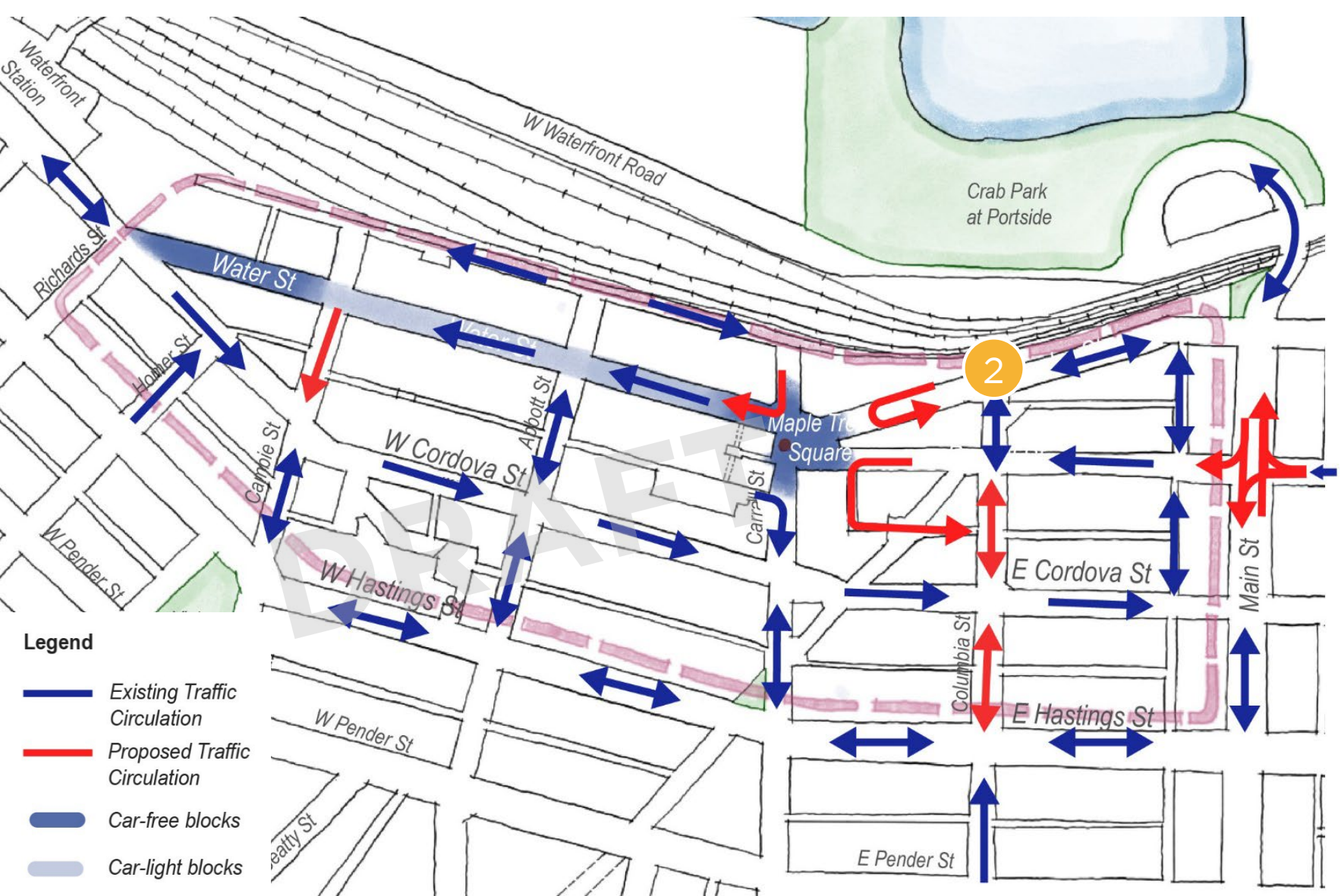
1

Legend

- Existing Traffic Circulation
- Proposed Traffic Circulation
- Car-free blocks
- Car-light blocks

Traffic Management Plan

Supporting Neighbourhood Access



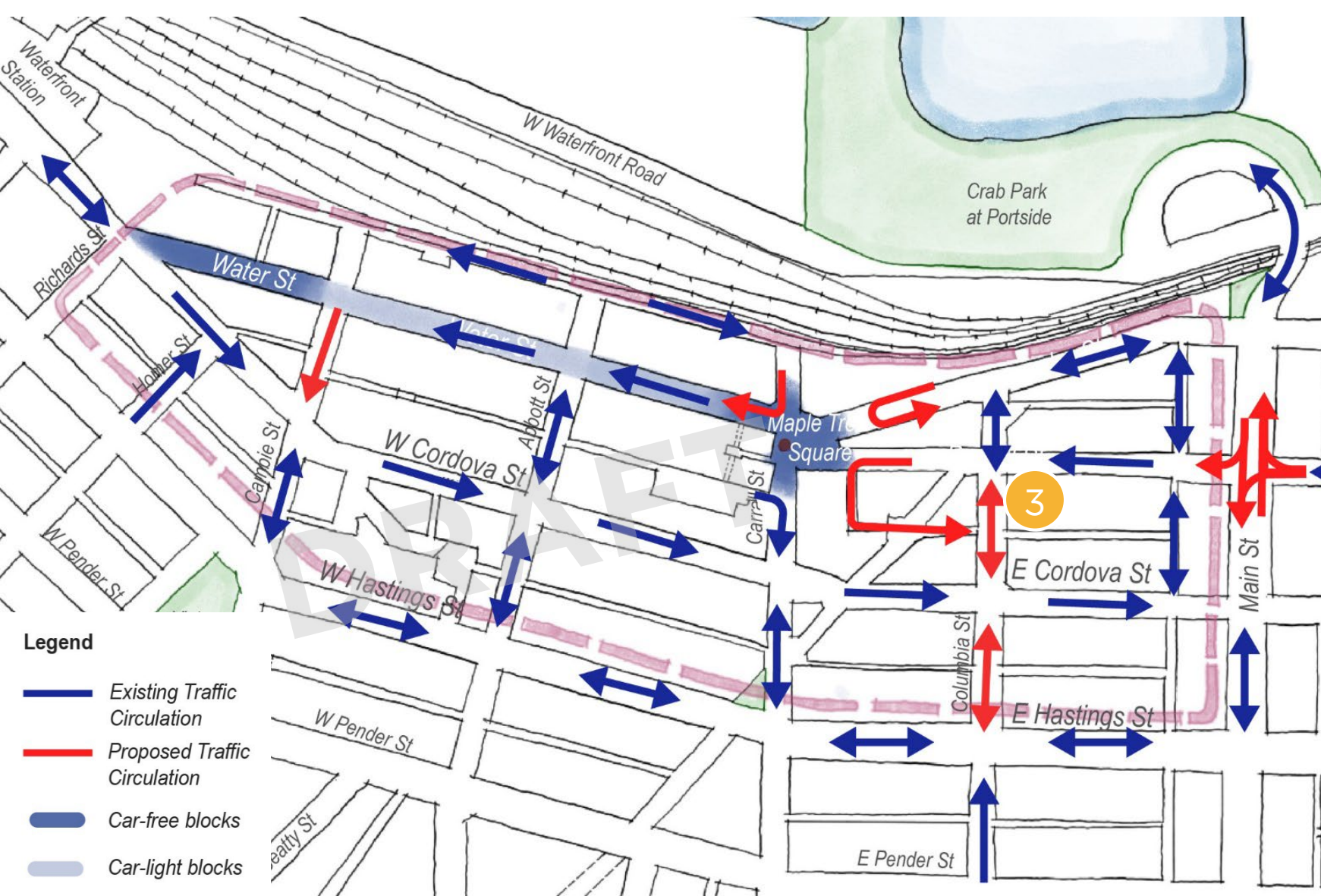
- Legend**
- Existing Traffic Circulation
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2

Conversion of Alexander Street to two-way

Traffic Management Plan

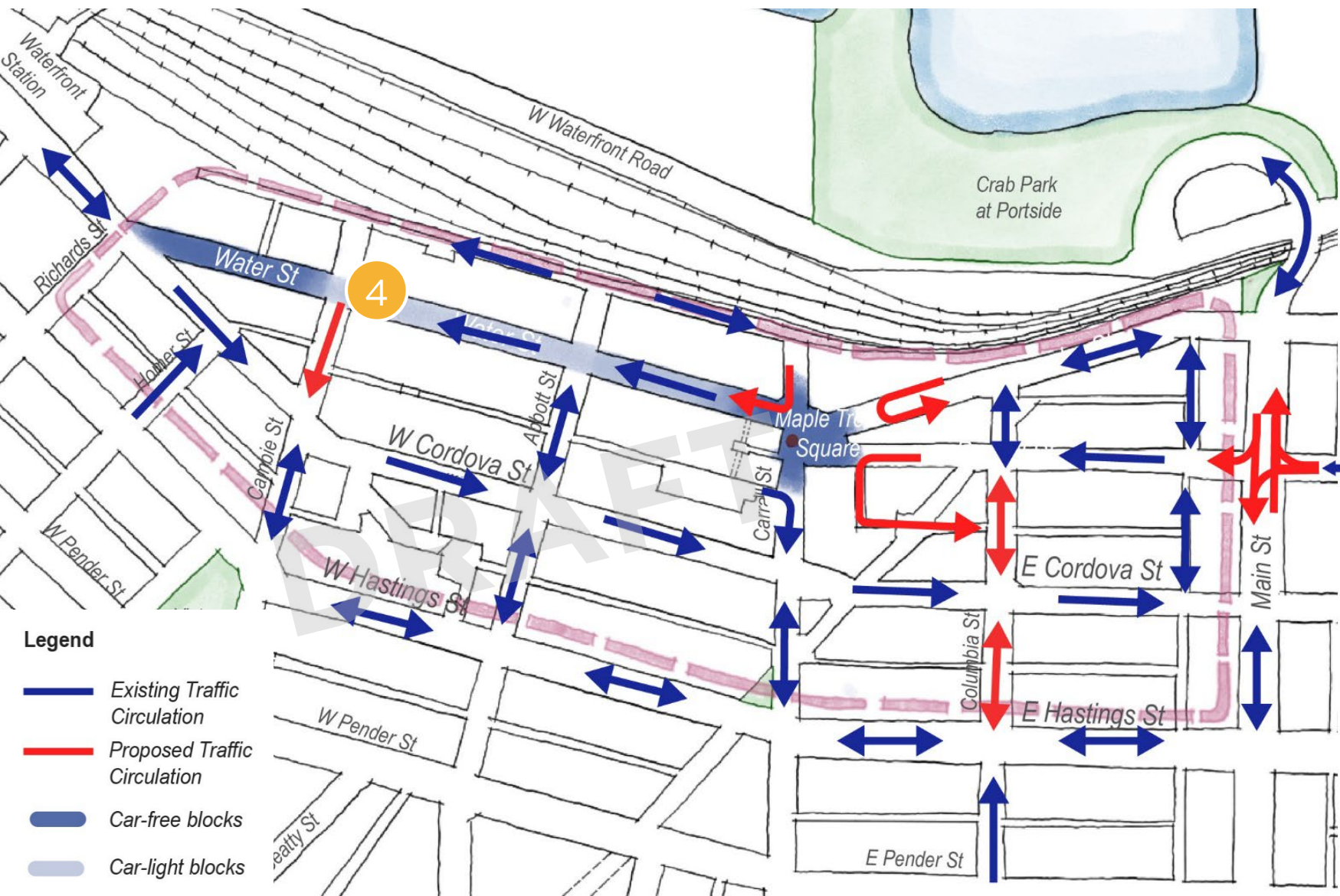
Supporting Neighbourhood Access



3
Conversion of Columbia St to two-way between Powell St and Hastings St

Traffic Management Plan

Supporting Neighbourhood Access



4

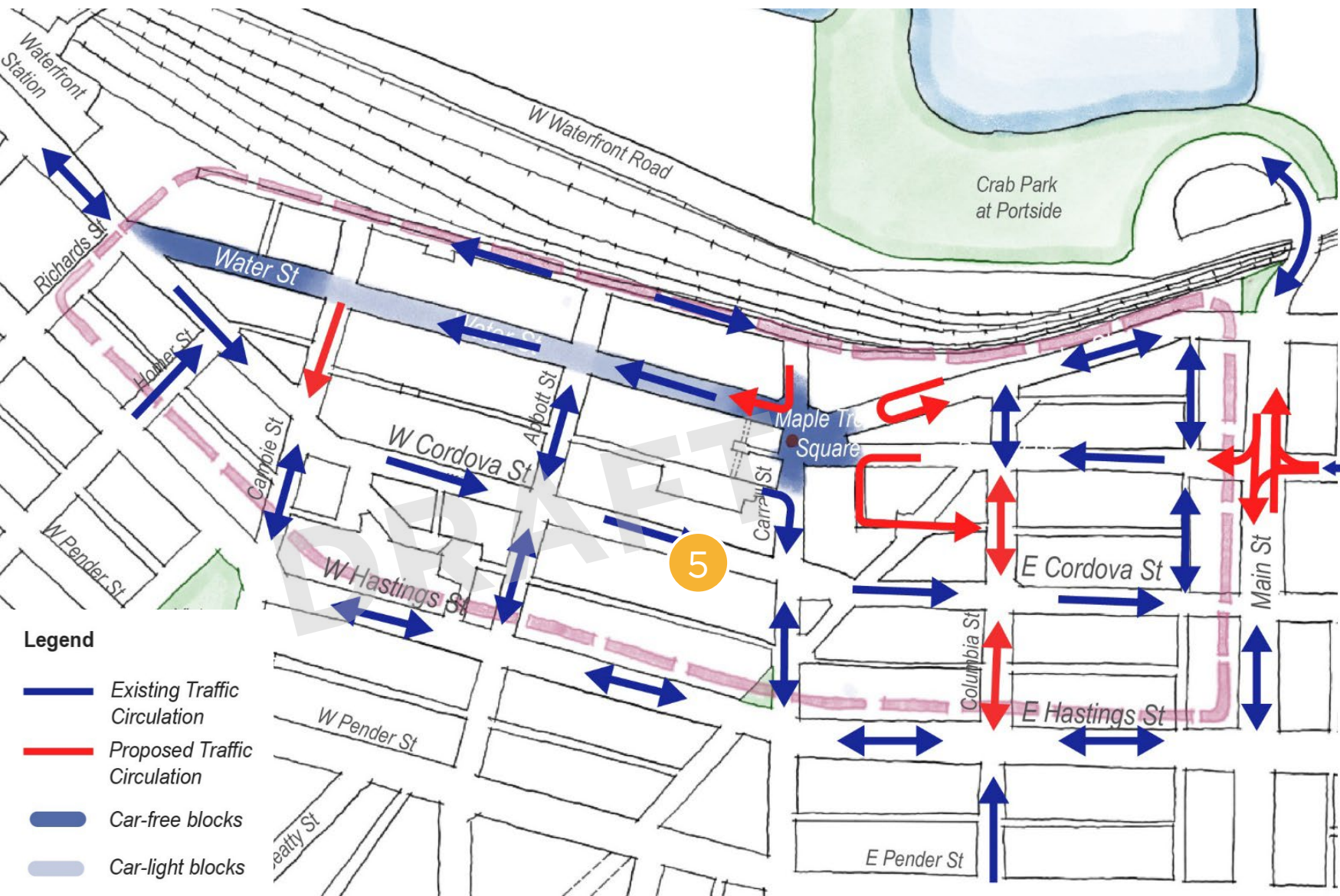
Conversion of Cambie Street to one-way southbound from Water Street to Cordova Street

Legend

- Existing Traffic Circulation
- Proposed Traffic Circulation
- Car-free blocks
- Car-light blocks

Traffic Management Plan

Supporting Neighbourhood Access

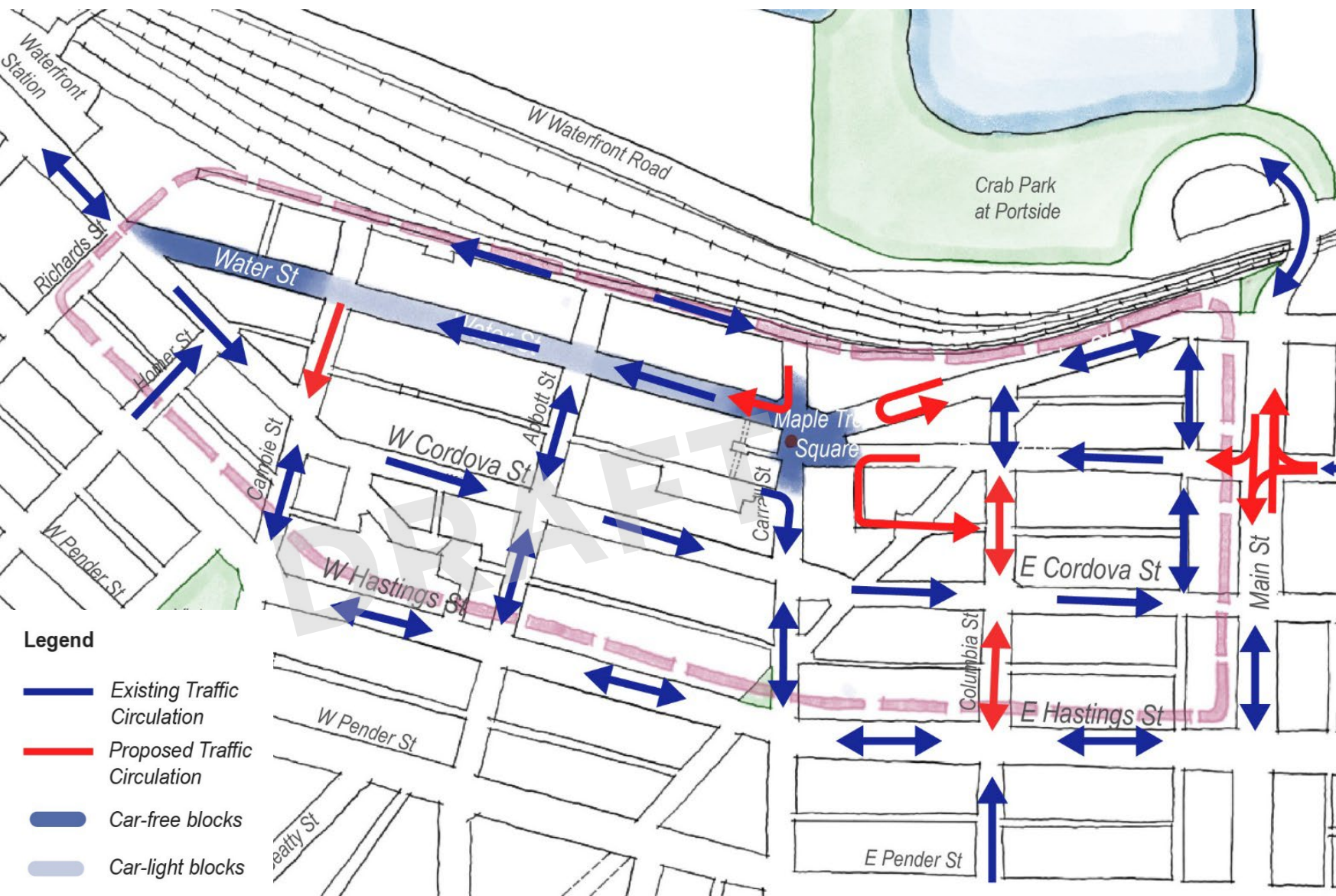


5

Cordova Street to remain one-way, as significant investment in signals and infrastructure would be required to enable two-way traffic flow

Traffic Management Plan

Supporting Neighbourhood Access

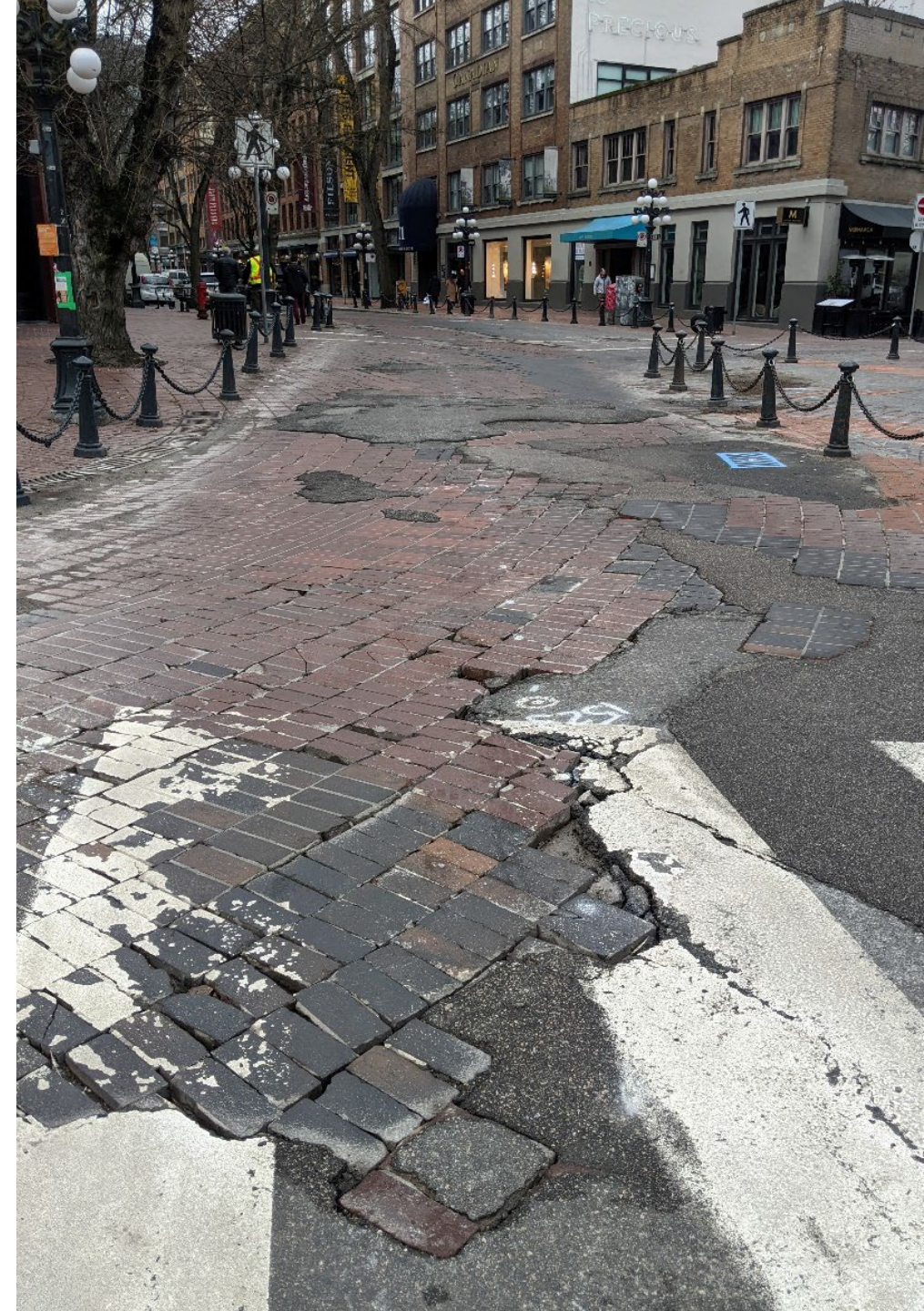


- ✓ **Local access will be maintained throughout**
- ✓ Staff are working closely with the GBIS and individual businesses, property owners and managers to **understand loading and access needs.**
- ✓ **Designated areas for tour buses, passenger zones, and commercial loading** will be implemented along Water Street, Abbott St, and Cambie St. Staff are in the process of finalizing the locations of these zones.

Timing

Coordination of Work in the Area

- Maple Tree Square interim paver repairs scheduled to **begin March 2024**
- Repairs require Maple Tree Square be **closed to motor-vehicle traffic**
- Repairs expected to be **complete by mid-June**
- **Coordinated traffic-management plan** to support both construction and the pilot reduces costs and disruption
- We've heard **concerns about combined length of construction and the pilot**



Benefits of a Two Month Summer Pilot

July and August



- ✓ Takes advantage of ideal weather and peak tourism
- ✓ Maximizes opportunity for businesses to create patios and merchandise displays
- ✓ Maximizes opportunity for public seating and expanded community programming
- ✓ Enables monitoring public life and impacts to transportation network
- ✓ Reduces operational costs

Suggestions for Summer 2024 Pilot

Staff have also heard:

1. Make the **pilot a 'win'** for businesses
2. Keep the area **clean and feeling safe** during the pilot
3. Retain **access for tour buses** | **Attract tourists** to the neighbourhood during the pilot
4. Make a pedestrian-first Water Street **feel lively, welcoming and vibrant**
5. Mitigate impacts to the larger **transportation network**



1. Business Support

Response:

- ✓ Offering more flexible design options and simplified permitting processes
- ✓ Collaborating with LCRB to facilitate licensing for temporary pilot patios
- ✓ Through the pilot, businesses could benefit from flexible design options for patios, space for merchandise displays, G-BIS led vending opportunities and steward new public realm seating

Learnings from this pilot will help inform long-term changes to the City's patio, merchandise display and other street use programs, to better support businesses city-wide.



2. Safety and Cleanliness

Response:

- ✓ Develop an enhanced sanitation and stewardship plan to keep the area clean and inviting
- ✓ Increase service levels for micro-cleaning, litter pick up and power-washing
- ✓ Plan for peer programs providing support to businesses and community members experiencing mental health and addiction challenges

The approach to safety and cleanliness will require ongoing collaboration between City staff, GBIS, community organizations, and the VPD.



3. Tourism and Tour Buses

Response:

- ✓ Maintain access for tour buses on the block of Water Street between Cambie and Abbott during the pilot, allowing for direct access to the heart of Gastown
- ✓ Collaborate with our partners to generate excitement about the summer pilot and encourage locals and visitors to explore the neighbourhood

Discussions will continue throughout spring with Destination Vancouver, tourism groups and community organizations in the area.



4. Lively, Welcoming & Vibrant

Response:

- ✓ Provide a variety of furniture designed to support both community programming and placemaking
- ✓ Enable a range of activities from small activations to large-scale events
- ✓ Collaborate with the GBIS to promote the use of the City's street entertainment permit and the new low-complexity event permit

Staff will work closely with the GBIS, the local Nations, community organizations, event organizers and businesses to create a welcoming experience on Water Street.

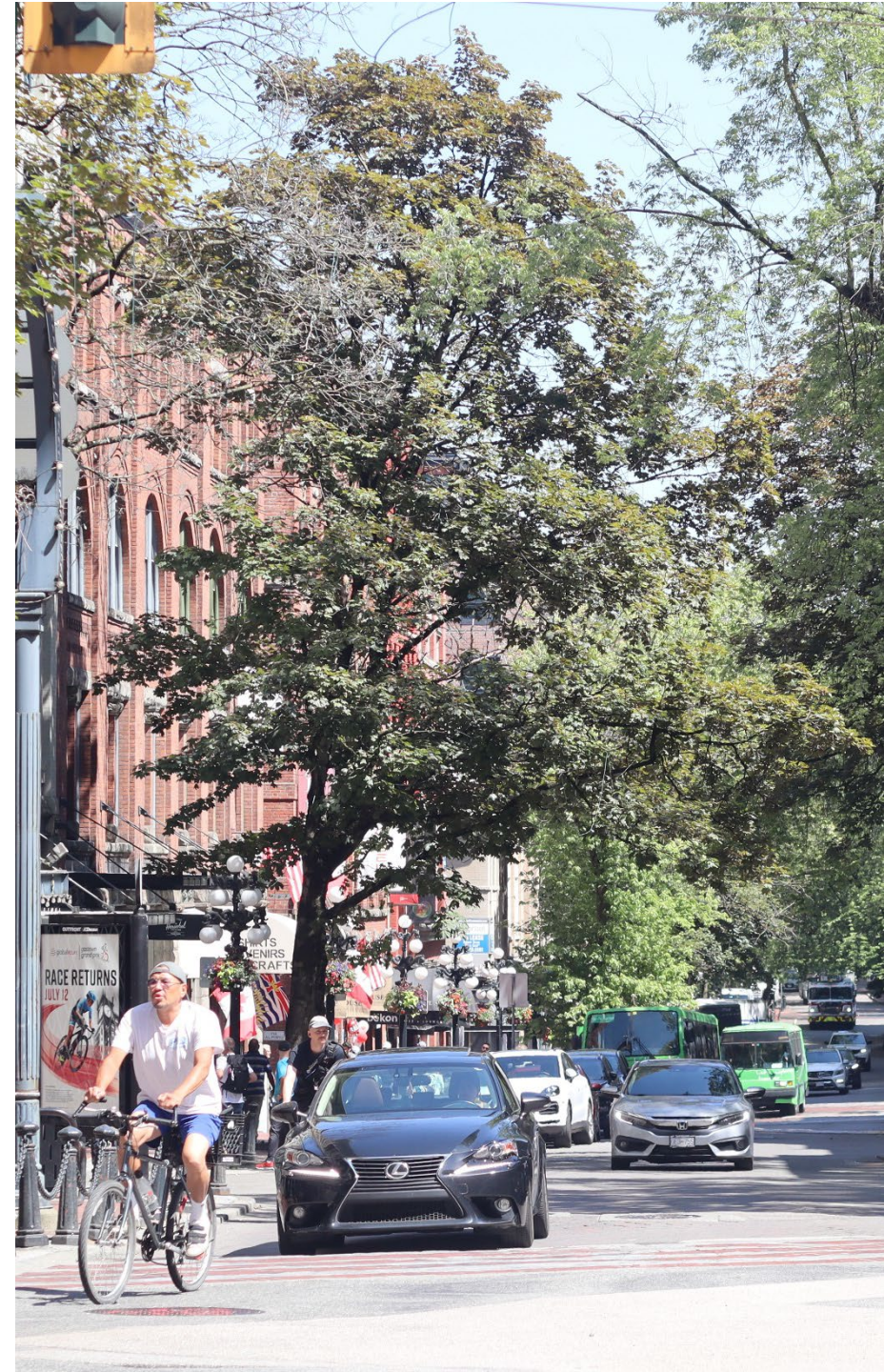


5. Transportation network

Response:

- ✓ Implement changes to the transportation network to support local access in the neighbourhood during construction and the pilot
- ✓ Respond in real-time with measures to address any issues observed in the field

Once the pilot launches, staff expect that adjustments will need to be made in response to emerging requests and issues. This will require ongoing and close collaboration with our partners.



Monitoring and Engagement

We are developing a comprehensive plan for the pilot to learn and understand:

- How many people walk or gather at different times of day
- How people use the street
- Why people visit
- The impacts to travel times and queueing on nearby streets
- Feedback on the + / - of the pilot



Pilot and Gastown Public Spaces Plan

- Summer 2024 pilot is **an important learning opportunity** and will inform development of the Gastown Public Spaces Plan
- Concurrent with planning for the pilot, staff will develop different **options for Gastown's streets and public spaces**
- During the pilot, the **public will be invited to provide feedback** on different public space and transportation options for the neighbourhood



Gastown Public Spaces Plan Milestones

Phase 2 (2024):

- Develop and evaluate different options for Gastown's streets and public spaces, including pedestrianization of Water Street

Q4 2024: Report to Council

- Key learnings from Summer Pilot
- Results from Phase 2 engagement on options for Gastown's streets and public spaces
- Emerging approaches for pedestrianizing Water Street
- Direction on future pilots

Phase 3 (2025):

- Develop an approach to streetscape design that integrates heritage, reconciliation and accessibility
- Advance design of key streets and public space towards implementation
- Identify required programming and stewardship strategies
- Develop a costing and phasing strategy

Recommended Pilot Approach

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Questions