



Staff Reports

File #: 152-2022, **Version:** 1

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Julie Lucido, Public Works Director

Prepared By: Julie Lucido, Public Works Director

TITLE:

Discussion Regarding the Temporary Closure of Main Street

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive report on the closing of Main Street to vehicular traffic between 2nd and 3rd Streets, and provide direction to staff.

DISCUSSION:

Summary

Staff has reviewed the concept to permanently close Main Street to vehicular traffic between 2nd and 3rd Streets. The street closure would trigger the need for a new project to address traffic control changes, hardscape modifications for pedestrian accessibility, and new stormwater quality treatment elements. Funding for the project has not been identified at this time. The temporary street closure has been extended through December 1, 2022 to coincide with the planned implementation of the proposed updated parklet program. Staff recommends that Main Street be reopened beginning December 2, 2022 and that the outdoor dining be reconfigured along the sidewalk at that time.

A permanent closure of Main Street and construction of a pedestrian plaza could be considered as a future capital improvement program project. A concept plan for the Central Napa Pedestrian Corridor along Brown Street was approved in 2018, but the engineering and construction is not currently funded. The closure of both Main Street and Brown Street to vehicle traffic is not recommended and staff seeks direction for future project planning.

Background

In summer 2020 as Napa County's initial COVID-19 stay at home orders began to lift and restaurants were allowed to serve customers in outdoor spaces, there was a strong push by businesses, community members, and City representatives to expand areas available for outdoor dining. The City acted to create the Napa Al Fresco outdoor dining and parklet program. The program was developed to allow restaurants and other food and beverage businesses to provide outdoor service on public lands such as parks, plazas, parking lots, and streets. Main Street from 2nd to 3rd Streets was closed to vehicular traffic as part of the program to accommodate outdoor dining.

Approximately a year before the start of the temporary closure of Main Street in August 2020, a capital improvement project had been completed along this same block. The City investment was approximately \$1.8M, funded through the City's general fund. The purpose of the project was to increase the sidewalk area along the west side of the street to accommodate expanded outdoor dining. The project also created a new loading area to support the businesses, upgraded the signal system at the intersection of Main and 2nd Streets to accommodate a pedestrian scramble (which is a separate signal phase where all traffic is required to stop and pedestrians may cross in any direction, including diagonally), and constructed removable bollards to facilitate temporary street closures for special events.

Legal Context for Temporary and Permanent Street Closures

The City Manager issued a series of emergency proclamations that were ratified by the City Council to provide the temporary approval for the expanded outdoor dining program. The specific authorization for the temporary vehicle closure of Main Street from 2nd to 3rd Streets was approved by the City Manager through Emergency Proclamation P2020-005 in August 2020. The City Manager's Proclamation authorized the Public Works Director to temporarily close Main Street to vehicles. Through an Administrative Directive, the Public Works Director directed the implementation of an approved traffic control plan for the street closure. The temporary street closure remains in place at this time and has been extended until December 1, 2022 through the City Manager's Emergency Proclamation P2022-003.

While State law does allow the City to close streets on a temporary basis for specific purposes, State law places significant restrictions on permanently closing public streets. The current temporary closure complies with California Vehicle Code Section 21101.e that allows, "Temporarily closing a portion of any street for celebrations, parades, local special events..." At the time the Emergency Declaration is terminated, the approval for the temporary closure will conclude.

The City's ability to permanently close a public street to vehicle traffic is constrained by Vehicle Code Section 21. In general, the State preempts local agencies from closing local streets unless there is specific statutory authority for the closure. One State statute that could potentially apply to the conditions present along Main Street is the Pedestrian Mall Law of 1960 (Streets and Highways Code Sections 11000 - 11806).

Under the Pedestrian Mall Law, cities are authorized to "prohibit, in whole or in part, vehicular traffic on a pedestrian mall," and to construct improvements "of any kind or nature necessary or convenient to the operation of such city streets as a pedestrian mall." The process would require noticed public hearings and findings as required by the act. The former Coombs Street Plaza, located between First and Pearl Streets was authorized as a Pedestrian Mall in the early 2000's through this process. The area was constructed for pedestrian use with a level surface and pavers as part of a City redevelopment project. In 2012, the Downtown Napa Specific Plan recommended reopening Coombs Street to traffic. Street use for the section of Coombs Street was reapproved by City Council several years ago, and the street section was reconstructed in a one-way configuration per the Specific Plan recommendations.

Considerations for the Permanent Vehicle Closure of Main Street

The transition to a pedestrian plaza would require the construction of physical modifications. A new

project would need to be added to the capital improvement program and the funding necessary to take on the project has not yet been identified. The project to transition the roadway block to function as a pedestrian mall would require: modified traffic control devices on the surrounding streets to accommodate the closure, hardscape improvements for a level surface to serve pedestrian use, and “green infrastructure” to filter stormwater. Each of the categories of improvements are discussed in more detail below.

Traffic Control Modifications: The closure of Main Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets would require the restriction of vehicle movements at each side of the block. Existing traffic signs and pavement markings would need to be removed and new traffic signs and pavement markings would be necessary. The traffic signal system at the intersection of Main and 2nd Streets was upgraded to accommodate a pedestrian scramble but could be removed as the intersection would operate in an all way stop control configuration. Removable decorative bollards are currently installed at each end of the block with temporary orange and white traffic control barricades placed for increased visibility. Modification of the end treatments would be recommended for enhanced visibility for a permanent closure and durability due to the frequency the area would need to be accessed by delivery and service vehicles.

Hardscape Modifications: Staff has spent a considerable amount of time researching requirements and contacting professionals to discuss pedestrian plaza accommodations. A finding from the research is that pedestrian areas may not include “abrupt changes in level” per the 2019 California Standards for Accessible Design Guide (11B.303.5). An abrupt level change is defined as a vertical dimension exceeding four inches between walks, sidewalks, or other pedestrian ways and adjacent surfaces. There is a specific exception for sidewalks along streets, however, once the street function no longer exists and the area is designated as a pedestrian zone, the exception would no longer apply. The guidance does allow railing systems to separate the surface levels that exceed four inches in height, but a railing treatment would negatively impact the use as a pedestrian area. A six-inch elevated “warning curb” (above the higher surface level) is an option for abrupt level changes only where pedestrian travel is parallel to the curb. In a pedestrian plaza where travel is anticipated in various directions, the elevated “warning curb” separation would not be allowable because of the potential of the raised curb becoming a tripping hazard. The conclusion of the research is that a project to construct a level pedestrian area would be required with the permanent street closure to vehicle traffic.

Stormwater Quality (“Green Infrastructure”): Hardscape modifications and the change of use from street usage to a pedestrian mall would trigger the State stormwater permit requirements to add stormwater quality landscaping and drainage elements. The water quality treatment planting areas would be required to be sized to treat the runoff from the hardscape as well as the existing roof drains from the buildings along the block.

While City staff would be able to design the traffic control elements, the plaza design would require professional architectural services. This is one of the most prominent locations in downtown Napa and the plaza improvements would need to be designed by a highly qualified architectural team with expertise in completing public plazas and conducting public engagement to ensure the project fits the character of downtown Napa. A comprehensive concept design process with stakeholder participation would be appropriate. The Central Napa Pedestrian Corridor Project (planned along Brown Street) completed a similar design process in 2018. That work is described in more detail in the section below.

Options for Future Projects

In 2018, a concept design for the Central Napa Pedestrian Corridor (Brown Street Corridor) was developed. The Central Napa Pedestrian Corridor project includes the segment of Brown Street between Pearl and 3rd Streets. The City had obtained a Caltrans grant to develop the concept design with the goal of enhancing the pedestrian environment within downtown Napa. The project planning considered potential redevelopment sites along the corridor and drew inspiration from the Napa setting.

The project was led by a landscape architectural team with an interdepartmental City staff team involved to provide technical information and guidance. A stakeholder group was formed with representatives from downtown businesses and property owners adjacent to the study area, adjacent Napa County offices, the Downtown Napa Association, Arts Council Napa Valley, and the City's Bicycle and Trails Advisory Commission. In July 2018 the concept was presented to the Parks, Recreation & Tree Advisory Commission. Feedback from the groups was incorporated into the plan. On October 10, 2018, the design team invited the Napa community to participate in the design process. The team then provided stakeholders with another opportunity to review the design and provide further comment. Staff presented the design to the Parks, Recreation and Trees Advisory Commission in late November 2018 and to City Council on December 18, 2018.

Some of the key design elements were developed to activate the space, facilitate events, and support family and child friendly activities. The project amenities were designed to create seating areas, shade through structures and trees, and decorative overhead lighting elements. The area would also include level surfacing, stormwater quality planting areas, and closure to vehicle traffic - with the exception of continued access to the 2nd Street parking garage. This corridor would also serve as a component of the downtown bicycle network.

An option to develop a pedestrian plaza along Main Street should include a similar scope of work to create a concept plan, led by an architectural team specializing in public plazas to ensure a high level of design. Additional focus on amenities, interface with the businesses and Veterans Park, and specific landscaping for stormwater quality, in addition to the level surfacing component, should be considered. Because the Main Street block and part of the Central Napa Pedestrian Plaza are on adjacent streets, staff does not recommend pursuing both projects with street closures due to circulation impacts and access to the existing parking garage.

In evaluating the options to proceed with a pedestrian plaza on Main Street or Brown Street, the traffic circulation should be considered. Prior to the temporary closure, Main Street carried a much higher volume of traffic and provides a more direct route through downtown. Main Street is designated as a collector and is continuous from 5th Street north through downtown to Pueblo. Brown Street in the downtown area is only open to traffic for a little more than a block (3rd Street to just north of 2nd Street for access to the 2nd Street parking garage). Additional considerations are that Brown Street was originally selected as the location for a pedestrian plaza due to the fit with the surrounding land use and redevelopment potential of adjacent properties.

A presentation of this information will be provided during the City Council meeting. Due to the various requirements to permanently close Main Street to traffic, staff recommends reopening Main Street in December 2, 2022 to coincide with the planned implementation of the proposed updated

parklet program and working with the businesses to reconfigure the outdoor dining area along the recently constructed extended sidewalks. The closure of both Main Street and Brown Street to vehicle traffic is not recommended due to traffic circulation impacts. Staff seeks direction on which project is preferred for future development. The staff recommendation is to continue with the Central Napa Pedestrian Corridor along Brown Street for the future pedestrian plaza project.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

This report is for informational purposes only; there are no financial impacts or appropriations necessary at this time.

CEQA:

The Public Works Director has determined that the Recommended Action described in this Agenda Report is not subject to CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c).

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

ATCH 1 - Presentation

NOTIFICATION:

None.