



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 14, 2020**

Date: May 7, 2020

From: Mayor Helps and Jeremy Loveday

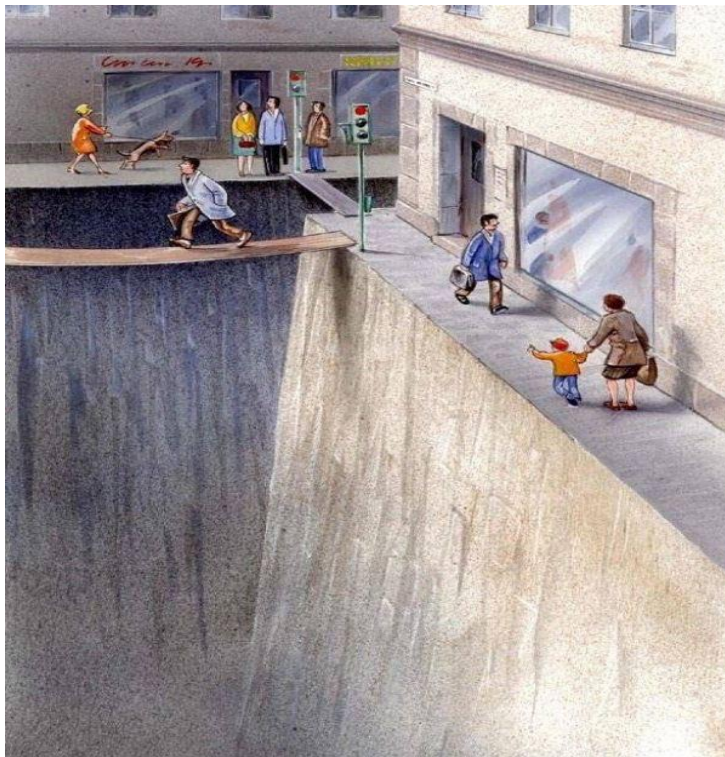
Subject: Increasing Physical Distancing for Pedestrians in Public Space

Background

British Columbia has been successful in flattening the curve through following public health measures, including the all-important physical distancing. On almost every page of BC's Restart plan (see attached) the need for physical distancing as a key prevention measure going forward is noted. For the last six weeks there have been a limited number of people using the City's streets and sidewalks, as anyone able to do so was following the public health advice: stay at home.

In the coming weeks and months as people return to work, as businesses re-open and as people begin to venture out into public spaces, our streets and sidewalks are going to see more people than they have during the pandemic. If we don't allocate more space for pedestrians, this is going to make it impossible for people to safely physically distance as they move about the city and will also create accessibility concerns for people using wheelchairs or pushing strollers who can't just easily step off the curb.

This illustration outlines the predicament very clearly.



Without additional measures put in place and additional space allocated for people in dense areas like downtown Victoria, village centres and Beacon Hill Park, Victorians will not be able to follow the best public health advice and will not be able to do our part to Restart BC and our own local economy.

As people are coming to and from work, and as people return downtown to support their favourite local businesses, they will want to feel safe. As Premier Horgan said in his press conference where he revealed the Restart BC Plan, if businesses re-open and no one comes, that is not a success.

Local governments have limited fiscal means to offer large stimulus packages, and the Community Charter – the Provincial Act which governs local governments – prohibits local governments from supporting businesses. But what local governments do have is jurisdiction over public space. During the pandemic, City staff have made incremental changes to create more space for pedestrians in village centres. As part of a safe and comprehensive approach to recovery, it is important to expand the number of safe pedestrian spaces in village centres as well as in the downtown core. By doing so, the City will be doing its part to ensure that there's lots of room for people to move safely.

In addition to the economic benefits of loyal customers being able to get safely to their favourite local stores, there are a multitude of proven and long-lasting health benefits to allocating more space in cities for physical activity. After being cooped up during the pandemic Victorians, and others from around the region who begin to come back downtown, will benefit health-wise from more space allocated so people can move freely and safely.

Physical distancing measures will be in place for 12-18 months until a vaccine is developed. A key element of our recovery in this period – economic, social and health-wise – is to allocate more public spaces for people.

Recommendations:

1. That Council direct staff to keep the physical distancing measures in place in village centres and other locations and report back to council with to further opportunities to allocate additional spaces for people to walk and roll safely in village centres and downtown in order to proactively prepare for increased pedestrian traffic as people begin to leave their homes.
2. That Council direct staff to implement a pedestrian-only approach to Beacon Hill Park for the summer – leaving the main parking lot open – using inexpensive and easily implementable means and that staff report back to Council with any feedback received before Council decides whether to implement the pedestrian only measures on a permanent basis.

Respectfully submitted,



Mayor Helps



Councillor Loveday