

Build Back Victoria Program and Government Street Pedestrian-Priority Initiatives Update Report



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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present public and stakeholder feedback on BBV and to recommended next steps to continue program delivery and advance Council's Strategic Priority action for permanent pedestrian priority initiatives on Government Street.



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Build Back Victoria Program

- Launched in June of 2020
 - More than 100 businesses took advantage of the program to support operational needs and meet physical distancing requirements between June and October.
- In October 2020 Council approved an extension of bylaw until October 31, 2021
 - Aligned with Provincial temporary expanded service area authorization
 - New requirements for insurance, accessibility features, and winterization components
 - Updated the digital application process
- As of April 7, 2021, there have been 47 approved BBV permits with 16 applications under review

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Public Engagement Process

- Public engagement process was launched February 1 to March 2, 2021, targeting businesses, residents and visitors to hear ideas and gain insights
- Opportunities to participate were promoted through print advertisements, digital newsletters, email and social media



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Public Engagement Process



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Public Engagement Process

- Staff worked with several organizations to promote the feedback opportunity
 - Neighbourhood Liaisons approached all neighbourhood associations to provide an opportunity for feedback and suggestions
 - A stakeholder focus group was held including representatives from the Downtown Victoria Business Association, The Bay Centre, Chamber of Commerce, Destination Greater Victoria, and others, to gather feedback
 - Project team canvassed all businesses on Government Street between Yates and Humboldt, visiting businesses in-person
- More than 780 online surveys were completed with over 8,700 comments provided

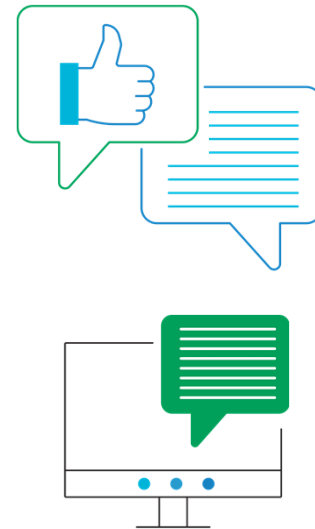


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Issues & Analysis

80% of survey respondents were satisfied with the Build Back Victoria program and comments were generally in favour of the program continuing



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Patios, Flex Spaces & Temporary Loading

- Majority of survey respondents liked these spaces and indicated they wanted to see more of them
- Desire for more permanent infrastructure to beautify areas and create a more cohesive look (planter boxes, tables, chairs, bollards)
- Many emphasized importance of maintenance / cleaning by host businesses
- Some concern about the loss of on-street parking for flex spaces and patios, while others supported converting more parking stalls to loading / pickup zones



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Mobile Vendors & Business In Parks

- Business in parks were generally well-liked by respondents, and respondents indicated they worked best when they balanced the needs of other park users
- Some voiced concern over suitability of parks to host businesses while bylaws were in place that supported temporary sheltering measures
- Many wanted more mobile vendors outside of the downtown core
- Food trucks generally well-liked; many commented they wanted more food trucks if they did not conflict with brick-and-mortar businesses, managed their waste and minimized noise pollution



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Street and Travel Lane Closures

- Many commented that street closures supported a more vibrant streetscape
- Many expressed desire for more live music / entertainment / animation, lighting, secure bicycle parking and incorporation of art / artisan vendors into street animations
- Some concerns voiced about access for seniors and people with mobility challenges, traffic navigation / flow, access for tourist buses and delivery challenges
- Some commented that more pick-up zones and short-term parking were needed to accommodate businesses



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Positive Community Feedback

- **The BBV Program is working**
 - New interest with continued health restrictions
 - The City will continue to balance different needs in our parks, roads and open spaces
 - Some trade-offs are inevitable
- **Continued program delivery in 2021:**
 - Standardized, consistent and still "bureaucracy light"
 - Requirements for safe and accessible spaces
 - Promotion of "corporate stewardship" model
- **Operational refinements – for example:**
 - Mobile vending locations
 - Additional bike parking at street closures
 - Public garbage bin servicing
 - Loading zone designations



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Government Street Pedestrian Priority

- **Community feedback indicated strong support to see interventions continue and be enhanced in 2021 and beyond.**
- **Key Themes:**
 - **Pedestrian priority does work**
 - Maintain access, commercial loading and delivery
 - **Make it look good**
 - Consider furniture, plants, colours, consistency
 - **Be consistent and predictable**
 - Make sure all spaces are used and easy to understand
 - **Program the street**
 - Provide opportunities for music and performance

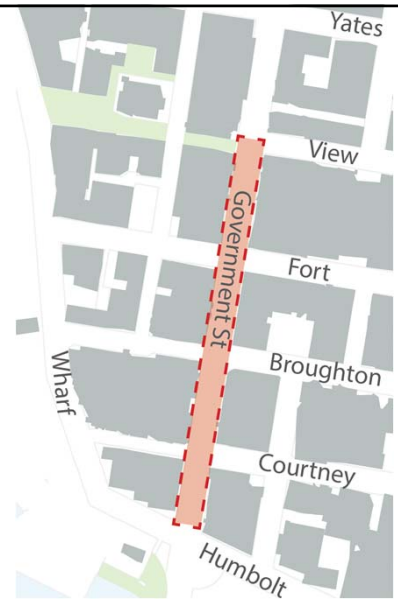


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Government Street 2021

- **Establish a pedestrian-priority zone from Humboldt Street to View Street**
 - Timed daily restriction between noon and 10 p.m.
 - Allow northbound pedicab, horse & carriage, and cycling traffic while traffic restrictions are in effect.
- **Maintain vehicle circulation, commercial pick-up and delivery functions from Humboldt Street to View Street**
 - Timed daily access between 10 p.m. and noon.
- **Maintain full time vehicle access, circulation and street parking from View to Yates Street**



**BBV Pedestrian Priority Zone:
Noon - 10 PM Daily**



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Government Street 2021

- **Incorporate new loading zones and accessible parking in priority locations**
- **Add attractive and welcoming furnishings, clear gateway treatments and streetscape elements**
 - Wood slab picnic tables and benches for public use
 - Planters for landscaping and flowers to complement hanging baskets
 - New seating platforms that double as small stages for performances and playable elements
 - Better signage
- **Program the Street**
 - Introduce programming, street activities and entertainment, building on 2020 efforts, while adhering to public health regulations



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Why a Time-Based Closure?

- Balances pedestrian priority objectives and business / circulation needs on the corridor
 - Responds to practical needs and volumes
 - Consistent through weekdays and weekends
 - Easy to communicate
- Aligns with existing commercial loading zones on the corridor and current public health restrictions
- Informs the ongoing concept design process for the Government Street Refresh



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Ongoing Resource Requirements

- The BBV program has been designed and delivered using existing staff and budget resources
 - No current permit or application fees; no dedicated staff
 - \$100,000 funding application
- Relies on temporary stewardship of public space
 - expectations that applicants will take responsibility for the management and maintenance
- Interest to expand / build on / apply lessons learned to support creative use of public space
 - The planning, development, public and business outreach, and future management of a permanent “steady state” program will need additional and ongoing staff resources
 - For consideration by Council as part of the 2022 Financial Plan deliberations



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Next steps

- Continue promoting and delivering program
- Report back to Council prior to October 31, 2021 with proposed bylaw extension
- Transition and modernize current bylaws in 2022, subject to Financial Plan approval



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Recommendation

Direct staff to bring forward recommendations to update and extend the current Business Recovery from Pandemic Bylaw (#20-072) prior to October 31, 2021 in order to support continued economic recovery



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