



**Council Member Motion
For the Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting of July 16, 2015**

Date: July 15, 2015

From: Councillor Jeremy Loveday, Councillor Lucas, and Councillor Thornton-Joe

Subject: Opening Government St. to Pedestrians – “LoveGov” Pilot Project

Summary

Many vibrant and walkable cities have a number of streets that are designated pedestrian only for specific days of the year. These streets become hubs of retail and cultural activity for locals and tourists. Following the lead of other cities, Victoria residents and business owners have discussed the idea, on a trial basis, of designating a section of Government Street for pedestrians only as a pilot project. The aims of the pilot project are to draw local people to Government Street, profile the Government Street businesses through sidewalk sales and other opportunities, animate and mildly ‘curate’ the street to turn it into a truly people place, and continue to gather ideas for the future of Government Street.

The City of Victoria’s 2015-18 Strategic Plan names “Strive for Excellence in Planning and Landuse”, “Enhance and Steward Public Spaces”, “Create Prosperity through Economic Development”, “Complete a Multi-Modal and Active Transportation Network” as strategic priorities for the City of Victoria. Opening Government Street as a pilot project would be a great chance to assess this idea in terms of its impact on these three strategic objectives.

Background

Earlier in the year, after receiving a flurry of emails about the fate and future of Government Street, Mayor Helps held “pop-up committees” in her office on Sunday mornings on the topic. She invited all of those who wrote to her about Government Street to join her for a cup of coffee and have a structured conversation. Two key themes emerged from these pop-up committees. First, there was a desire to *do* something about Government Street. Second, there was a desire to see Government Street with a “year-round economy” and a place that first and foremost was for locals. As Paul Nursey Tourism Victoria CEO regularly states, tourism is changing and becoming more experiential. The number one question at the Tourism Victoria Visitor Centre is “What do the locals do?”

Building on the themes coming out of the pop-up committees and with a desire to draw in a larger group of people, including more Government Street property and business owners, the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) hosted a Government Street Charette in late May. Over 50 people attended this half-day event and participated in workshop on the economic, social and physical aspects of Government Street. Again a key theme that emerged in each of these topic areas was a desire to see Government Street become a local people place.

In response to feedback from City staff, the DVBA and the Government Street merchants, the amended recommendation is provided for Council’s consideration.

Motions:

1. Be it resolved that the City of Victoria work in collaboration with the Downtown Victoria Business Association, downtown residents, the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network and other interested

stakeholders to convene a "LoveGov" series of pedestrian only Sundays on Government Street including Saturday October 10, one Saturday or Sunday in November, one Saturday or Sunday in January, and culminating in a "LoveGov" wrap up event on Sunday February 14th 2016.

2. Direct staff, working in partnership with the DVBA, Government Street merchants and other stakeholders, to develop a mechanism to evaluate the success of this pilot project.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Jeremy Loveday



Councillor Margaret Lucas



Councillor Thornton-Joe