



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

Date: July 7, 2015

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

Subject: Opening Government St. to Pedestrians – 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 use as a one-day pilot project in 2015. The aims of the pilot project are to draw local people to Government Street for the day, 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.

Building on the work done at this charette, the DVBA in partnership with the City and other stakeholders will develop a 12-month action plan for Government Street. This work will be done later in the fall. However, to continue building the momentum and to *do something* this summer we recommend that the City of Victoria, the DVBA, the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network, and the Downtown Residents Association, do a one-day pilot project on Government Street where the street is open to pedestrians only and where Government Street businesses are profiled and showcased.

Motion:

Be it resolved that the City of Victoria work in collaboration with the Downtown Victoria Business Association, Downtown Residents Association, and the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network to open the section of Government St from Humboldt St. to Yates St. to pedestrians for a one-day pilot project on August 16th 2015 from 12pm-5pm.*

*We have selected this date because it is a Sunday in August where there is not a cruise ship in town. This means there will be no interference with buses and that we can more fully assess the extent to which the pilot project draws local people.

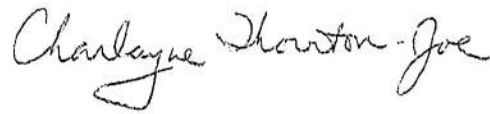
Respectfully submitted,



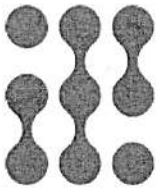
Councillor Jeremy Loveday



Councillor Margaret Lucas



Councillor Thornton-Joe



GREATER VICTORIA PLACEMAKING NETWORK

'citizens of Greater Victoria promoting creative & healthy public spaces, multi-use streets, urban innovation & citizen engagement'

City of Victoria – City Council

Letter of Support: Government Street motion

July 8, 2015

I am writing in support of the initiative to conduct one or more pilot projects on Government Street in August and / or September of this year.

As you know, our organization is dedicated to the improvement of streets and public places because those are the shared spaces where community is created. Government Street is an iconic connector in our community – one that has the potential to be our central downtown hub. Many people tell us that Government Street can be more vibrant and be a street that regularly draws local residents and visitors to the city centre.

We also believe in the power of community pilot projects. By testing out new ideas in public spaces, we can innovate and invigorate our city more quickly.

We are therefore excited about the possibility of two pilot days on Government Street this year. We think that businesses, residents and visitors can all benefit from the process of exploring ideas.

If Council passes a motion to create these pilot projects, we look forward to collaborating with the City, DVBA and many others in creating days for creative exploration on one of our most important streets.

Sincerely,

Lorne Daniel
Director, Greater Victoria Placemaking Network



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July 9, 2015

Mayor Lisa Helps & Victoria City Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square,
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor & Councillors,

On behalf of the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA), I am writing to express our support for a City-initiated, pilot project to close and animate Government Street in a manner that will provide the opportunity of seeing and experiencing it from a whole new perspective.

Government Street has been woven into our community conscience as an attractive and appealing avenue, lined with welcoming shops and trees. For many locals, when families and friends come to visit, Government Street is often one of the places that they are taken. Do locals always come to Government Street of their own accord? Not as often we would like. For that reason, we support an initiative that would allow residents to rediscover this street. We also seek to explore the question of whether a temporary pedestrian-only Government Street experience brings benefits to local businesses and place-making opportunities for residents.

If the City works with business and property owners, the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network, the Downtown Residents Association, and the DVBA, we believe a shared vision for curating and animating the street will be created. To this end, next week we will be convening a meeting of Government Street business and property owners to help explain the concept and seek their input.

Yours sincerely,


for Suzanne Bradbury
Chair