



Governance and Priorities Committee Report

For the May 7, 2015 Meeting

To: Governance and Priorities Committee **Date:** April 23, 2015
From: Brad Dellebuur, Acting Assistant Director, Transportation and Parking Services
Subject: 'Parklet' Trial Installation – 700 block Fort Street

Executive Summary

Businesses on the 700 block of Fort Street (Fort Street Business Association) have requested permission from the City to install a temporary "parklet" in two parking spaces on their block. A parklet is an enclosed deck provided as a space for the general public to sit and relax. The project is also supported by the Downtown Victoria Business Association, who will assume legal responsibilities for the pilot project. The collaborative, holistic approach taken by the applicants, consistent with identified outcomes in the City's 2015 Strategic Plan, included consulting with fellow business and property owners on the block, and City staff. Identified safety, access and liability concerns were mitigated through modifications to the design, protocol for maintenance, and a feedback and evaluation process to address any emerging issues at the parklet.

As the installation is for use by the general public, and not a specific business, staff recommend exempting the project from street occupancy fees.

The trial will be for one year, after which time an evaluation will be conducted to determine if the parklet should remain.

Recommendation:

1. That Council endorse the Fabulous Fort Pilot Parklet project proposed by the 700 block Fort Street Business Association and the Downtown Victoria Business Association.
2. That Council waive street occupancy fees for this trial.
3. That Council direct staff to report back to Council in one year's time on the pilot project, no later than July 2016.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Hill'.

Michael Hill, Downtown
Coordinator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Dellebuur'.

Brad Dellebuur, A/Assistant
Director, Transportation and
Parking Services

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:

APR 23, 2015

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to request Council endorse the Fabulous Fort Pilot Parklet project, proposed by the Fort Street Business Association (FSBA) and the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA).

Background

The FSBA applied for and received a grant in the summer of 2014 from the Coastal Communities Credit Union (CCCU) to fund a "parklet" downtown. Semi-permanent parklets are small enclosed decks built over 1-2 street parking spots, enabling the general public to sit, relax and socialize. Parklets are seen as good examples of place making, and can enhance public space and contribute to downtown vibrancy.

Other cities, including Vancouver, have programs to encourage parklets. San Francisco has permitted approximately 50 parklets, with similar parameters considered for this application. The City has a process to accommodate requests for short-term parklets (1-3 days), however Council approval is required for a long term installation. This project would be the first semi-permanent parklet installed in the City.

To test the concept of a parklet, the FSBA hosted a block event in September 2014, where temporary parklets were installed along the block for a single day (as part of their "Eat on the Street" event). The installations were favourably received by the public, with no operational issues identified. Once the CCCU grant was received, the FSBA began to review possible sites for a more permanent installation, and consulted with the neighbourhood.

Taking a proactive and comprehensive approach on this place making project, the FSBA enlisted design assistance from Cascadia Architects to develop a conceptual plan of the parklet. In the fall of 2014, written communication, along with a preliminary rendering of the parklet, was circulated to all business and property owners on the block, and to City staff (Engineering, Parks, and Development Services). An open house was subsequently held in February 2015. Feedback at the open house indicated adjacent tenants and property owners were supportive, but some had reservations about noise emanating from the parklet later in the evenings. After reviewing the feedback received, and identifying several measures to address concerns, support for the proposed site was secured from all business and property owners. Documentation (see attached project overview and proposed evaluation methodology) were then formally submitted to the City.

Issues & Analysis

Construction details/Configuration

The proposed parklet is approximately 12m long, and would occupy two on-street spaces, in front of 718 and 724 Fort Street.



The parklet is wood-frame construction, with individual and bench seating for the public, table space, as well as a small landscaped area at the either end of the parklet. The parklet is 2.5m wide, and does not conflict with motor vehicles in the adjacent traffic lane. The parklet is tapered at both ends, to allow people parking vehicles to easily enter and exit the spaces at either end of the parklet.



The applicants have advised Abstract Developments will contribute labour to construct the parklet, and Home Lumber has committed to provide framing materials at cost.

Development Services, Engineering, and Parks staff reviewed the proposed drawings, and noted the following:

- The parklet does not block access to any fire department connections outside adjacent buildings
- Setbacks to light posts, electrical kiosks, and other public or third-party utility infrastructure are sufficient to avoid conflicts
- The majority of the construction of the parklet will be constructed off-site, to minimize installation impacts to the block.
- The parklet is not to be permanently fastened to any public infrastructure.
- Galvanized transition plates at the entry/exit points are provided, to ensure wheelchair/stroller access from the public sidewalk.
- The wood deck surface will be finished with a non-slip coating.
- The City reserves the right to remove the parklet, if the Director of Engineering and Public Works considers removal of all or part of the deck necessary (i.e. emergency repairs to City infrastructure).

Maintenance

To address concerns about possible graffiti, vandalism or other forms of damage at the parklet, the proponents have engaged the DVBA clean team to keep the parklet in clean condition. If damage occurs that is beyond the scope of the DVBA, the fabricator of the parklet will be engaged to make the necessary repairs. FSBA members will also arrange for maintenance and watering of the parklet landscaping.

Ownership and Risk

The FSBA will be facilitating the parklet trial project under the auspices of the DVBA. The DVBA will be the legal entity responsible for the parklet, and will provide the required general liability insurance and standard indemnity provision, to the satisfaction of the City. Any expenses required for the operation of the parklet (including removal) will be funded by the DVBA.

Evaluation/Monitoring

Some tenants on the block expressed concerns about possible noise and behaviour issues at the parklet, particularly in the evening. Signage advising the parklet is open to all users, and

encouraging appropriate behaviour will be posted on the parklet, and to advise smoking is not permitted in the parklet. All signage text will be reviewed and approved by the City.

The proponents have recruited the support of adjacent tenants in monitoring the site and reporting any issues to VicPD. Private security working for businesses and others will also monitor the area, and report issues to VicPD.

Feedback and evaluation sessions with the stakeholders on the block will also be held at the first, third, and sixth month periods, and at the end of the trial, to address any emerging issues regarding use of the parklet.

The duration of the pilot is not specified in the application; however, a one year trial period should be sufficient to determine whether the parklet should remain in place. At that time, the proponent will assess costs and benefits of the parklet, as outlined in the Evaluation Methodology included in the proposal. Staff will review this information as well as any other information relevant to the operation of the parklet, and report back to Council in July 2016, with the findings of the review and recommendations.

Permitting/Revenue Impacts

As noted earlier, short-term occupation of the street for this type of installation is typically administered by staff through the Special Events permitting process. For this project, a street occupancy permit will have to be issued by Engineering and Public Works Department staff. Street rental fees are typically required when public space is reserved, however, as the parklet is for use by the general public, and not for customers/clients of a specific business, staff recommend Council exempt the project from street occupancy fees (\$40/day) for the trial period.

An on-street parking space in the 700 block Fort Street has been estimated to generate \$25/day in parking revenue. With two parking spaces occupied for a 12 month period, parking revenue could be reduced by approximately \$15,000.

Conclusions

The 700 block Fort Street parklet is a positive initiative for enhancing public space in this area and engaging downtown businesses to make improvements to downtown vibrancy. An empowered group of applicants have taken a proactive and comprehensive approach on this place making project, through neighbourhood consultation, design refinement of the parklet, and the stated commitments to manage operational issues. Staff recommend Council support this pilot project, and that Council waive the street occupancy fees.

Recommendations

1. That Council endorse the Fabulous Fort Pilot Parklet project proposed by the 700 block Fort Street Business Association and the Downtown Victoria Business Association.
2. That Council waive street occupancy fees for this trial.
3. That Council direct staff to report back to Council in one year's time on the pilot project, no later than July 2016.

Attachments: Fabulous Fort Pilot Parklet Project Proposal
Evaluation Methodology

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FABULOUS FORT PILOT PARKLET PROJECT

PROPOSAL

To install in the spring of 2015 a permanent parklet in front of 718 and 724 Fort Street, (The Dutch Bakery and Dots Clothing).

This is intended to be a pilot project, called the **Fabulous Fort Pilot Parklet Project**, with the Fort St Business Association (FSBA), the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) and the City of Victoria.

Please see the attached Evaluation Methodology (dated March 2, 2015 and totalling six pages), and Cascadia Architects' drawings (dated March 11, 2015, totalling two pages for the drawing set, and with five copies provided).

INITIATIVE'S GOAL

To enhance the streetscape on a busy downtown street by providing a public space where people can sit in a park-like setting, to slow people down as they move along Fort Street, and to increase economic activity along the block and Fort Street.

INITIATIVE BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2014, the FSBA was awarded \$10,000 from Coastal Community Credit Union's *"Building Healthy Communities Grant Fund"* to bring Victoria's first parklet to Fort Street.

To test the concept of a parklet, in September of 2014, the FSBA, with assistance from the DVBA and the City of Victoria, hosted the "Eat On The Street" – Fort Street's Parklet Day. The event was held as a way to test and monitor the business community's support

of a permanent parklet on the street. The event was a huge success and rallied the business community around the concept of a parklet in our block. The success of this event has given us the confidence and assurances that we need to move forward with this pilot project.

With the grant funds from Coastal Community Credit Union, architectural design and building assistance from Cascadia Architects, and in partnership with the DVBA, we hope to bring this initiative to the 700 block of Fort Street.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

In the fall of 2014, all the businesses at street level were delivered a letter outlining the proposal for the parklet along with a copy of the rendering. Additionally, an email was sent out to all the businesses on the FSBA's mailing list. Many of the property owners along the street were also notified by email. We have received no opposition to the parklet in its proposed location of 718 and 724 Fort Street. Both of the businesses and the property owners of the proposed location support the parklet. An open house, in which all the business owners/managers and property owners were invited to, was held on February 11, 2015. This open house was an opportunity for those on the street to see the rendering and to discuss the parklet.

IDENTIFIED ISSUES

During our open house, the manager of the Ritz Hotel expressed concerns over the possible noise in the parklet at night. We have worked closely with the management of the Ritz Hotel to address their concerns in the design and signage of the parklet, along with contacting the Victoria Police Department (VPD) Community Liaison Officer and Themis Security. We plan to monitor the parklet closely to deter any inappropriate behaviour. The management of the Ritz Hotel has also agreed to help us monitor the parklet during the evening/night hours.

PROJECT CONSIDERATIONS

The parklet will be officially insured and owned by the DVBA. The DVBA's Clean Team services the 700 block of Fort Street daily and will oversee general maintenance. The business owners and residential building manager, who live and work adjacent to the proposed location, have also committed to keeping the parklet clean and attractive to users. Those responsibilities aside, the FSBA will oversee general management of the parklet, trouble-shoot problems, and collect information to allow for the systematic evaluation of the parklet's success. The FSBA plans to hold feedback and evaluation sessions with stakeholders on the block at the first month, third month, sixth month, and one year timeframes.

GENERAL USE

The parklet should be considered an extension of the pedestrian sidewalk space, and as such is subject to the same bylaws as our public sidewalks. There will be signage on the parklet introducing the parklet concept and outlining general terms of use: Relax. Enjoy. Respect. The parklet will be uncovered and positioned to be well-lit by a neighbouring street lamp. The proposed parklet is located deliberately on the sunny side of Fort Street, adjacent to multiple cafés, restaurants, and shops: Dutch Bakery, Crust Bakery, Street Level Espresso, Russell Books, etc.

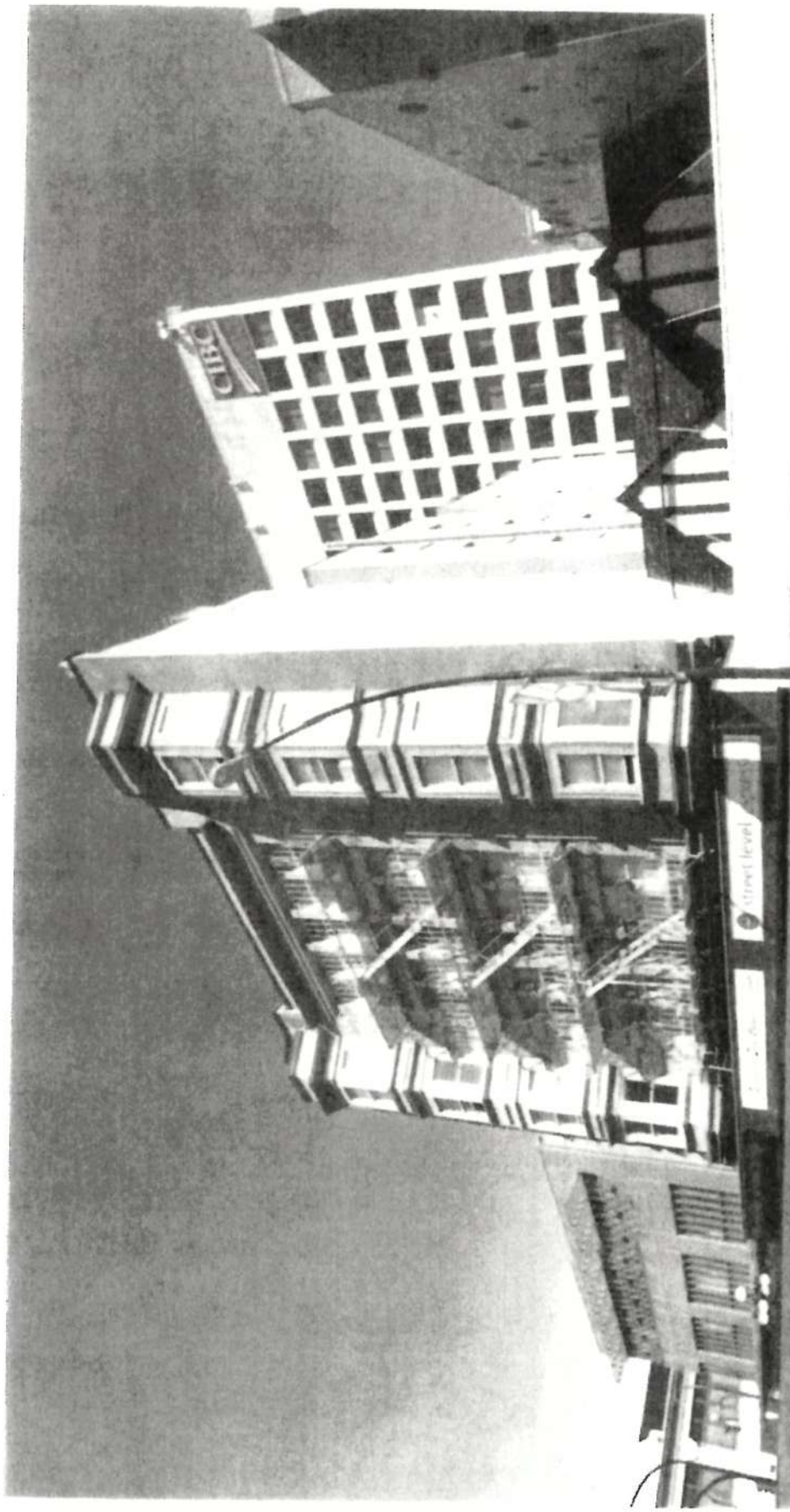
Based on Fabulous Fort's experimental Parklet Day in September 2014, it is hoped that this location is the best choice to facilitate appropriate, respectful and enjoyable use. During nights, Ken Cooper of the Ritz, as well as Themis Security (Oscar and Libby's security) will be the "eyes on the street" and will communicate with Fort Street's VPD Community Liaison Officer, Dan O'Connor, as well as the VPD's non-emergency line. Dan O'Connor is supportive of the parklet project and will be assisting in the evaluation process. The FSBA plans to negotiate a maintenance contract for any significant physical damage to the parklet with the contractor responsible for its construction.

MARKETING AND PROFILE

The Fabulous Fort Pilot Parklet Project has already generated a high level of interest from both media and the community and has already been the subject of a CBC Radio interview, magazine articles, and television reports.

Marketing efforts will include but not be limited to the aforementioned media channels. Special attention will be paid to acknowledging the project partners, including Coastal Community Credit Union, the DVBA, Cascadia Architects, and the City of Victoria, if so desired.

Progress on the project will be reported in Fabulous Fort's social media, with links to the social media of the surrounding businesses. Finally, the FSBA plans to create an education piece to distribute to all businesses, property owners, and residents on the block to outline the facilitation of appropriate parklet use, and to outline steps to take if the space is being used inappropriately.



FORT STREET Parklet

Evaluation Methodology



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FORT ST. PARKLET EVALUATION

PARKLET EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This report presents the methodology for evaluating the Fort Street Parklet. Parklets are tiny, temporary open spaces meant to make the streetscape more socially and economically vibrant. They add crucial seating and green space to neighborhoods, and encourage livable streets. With the help of a Coastal Community Credit Union grant and in conjunction with the City of Victoria, the Fort Street Business Association is planning to host a parklet on Fort St., the summer of 2015.

The evaluation methodology comprises activity mapping, two qualitative surveys, business metrics and police reports. The intent of the parklet evaluation is to gain an understanding of the changes in streetscape ambiance, public response to these new types of spaces, how the parklet is serving the needs of users who visit it, and if this space is positively contributing toward the economic and social vibrancy of the area. The overall evaluation serves to assess both positive and negative aspects of the parklet as perceived by users of the street and adjacent businesses.

1. ACTIVITY MAPPING

A structured user observational study can establish relative usage patterns, changes in usage, and can add a level of qualitative data to complement quantitative metrics. The user observation analysis will aim to observe the parklet area before and after its installation. The before observations will take place during the month of April, 2015 prior to the installation of the parklet. Ideally, the before observations should occur over the same time period that the parklet will be in operation, however, this is not possible given the current timeframes for the project. If the opportunity presents itself, post observation studies when/ if the parklet is removed will compliment this evaluation.

Activity Mapping is the primary technique by which the use of street space and parklet will be recorded and characterized. Activity mapping records the range, location, times, and volumes of behaviors, activities, and uses in the public realm. Human behaviors such as posture; activities such as eating, drinking, or cell phone use; and uses such as waiting for transit are noted. For this study, parking occupancy of the spaces on the block will also be recorded. Activity scans will also assess perceived nuisances and maintenance issues.

The mapping will be conducted in two hour shifts for peak afternoon (12-2 pm) and evening (5-7 pm) hours and will be complemented with photos. Assessments will take place on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. "Before" surveys will take place over two weeks at the beginning and end of April, and the "During" surveys will be every week for June, July and August.

Observation recording may continue after the summer, once per month. The frequency of activity mapping is in line with similar parklet evaluation studies but may be adjusted to better capture actual usage of the parklet and the surrounding area and the availability of volunteers.

II. BUSINESS SURVEY (BEFORE AND AFTER)

This study will include business operator interviews with the intent of capturing individual attitudes and perceptions of the Fort Street Parklet from the part of the business owners on the block. These interviews additionally describe the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Parklet as an economic generator for business. Most importantly, business operator interviews will gauge attitudes toward the neighborhood and business patterns before and after the parklet installation.

These surveys will be both on-line and in person depending on how best to reach particular business operators. Likewise this survey instrument may occur at the beginning, middle and end of the summer to evaluate changes in perception.

III. PEDESTRIAN & USER INTERCEPT SURVEY (BEFORE AND AFTER)

Pedestrian Intercept Surveys will aim to capture prevailing attitudes and perceptions of pedestrians along Fort Street and parklet users. The survey instrument will be comprised of closed and open-ended questions. Participants will be asked to rate factors such as cleanliness, safety, and accessibility. Additional questions will assess attitudes about the parklet and its design. Participants will also be asked to provide demographic details, travel mode (means of travel), and information about spending habits.

Intercept surveys will occur over varying periods and days to evaluate the diversity of potential perceptions and experiences.

IV. BUSINESS SALES METRICS (BEFORE AND AFTER)

A number of businesses are located immediately adjacent to the proposed parklet. A chief aim of the parklet evaluation is to assess economic effects for these adjacent business. Sales data will be compared from previous years over the same period of time that the parklet is in use. While a number of factors contribute to an economic climate, these sales data, coupled with surveys and user observations can provide a robust evaluation.

The availability of sales data will depend on the businesses willingness to participate.

V. POLICE REPORTS (BEFORE AND AFTER)

As with any strategy to increase public usage of an area, concerns related to increased nuisance will be assessed through police reports for the area, compared to previous years. Similar to economic vibrancy, many factors can contribute to swings in nuisance levels. However, pairing police reports with the other forms of evaluation, again provides a structured form of evaluating for potential negative outcomes.

VI. CONCLUSION

All five forms of assessment strategies reflect parklet evaluations undertaken in different cities. Similarly, it is noted that the City of Victoria will be conducting independent assessments which will complement these data. This structured analysis provides opportunities for data comparison and can add to the growing body of literature for successful parklet strategies.

VII. REFERENCES

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