



# STAFF REPORT

AGENDA NO: 9a

MEETING DATE: July 6, 2020

**To: Honorable Mayor and City Council**

**Date: July 6, 2020**

**From: Lisa Goldman, City Manager – (650) 558-7204  
Syed Murtuza, Director of Public Works – (650) 558-7230  
Kevin Gardiner, Community Development Director – (650) 558-7253**

**Subject: Public Hearing to Consider the Extension of the Temporary Street Closure of Downtown Burlingame Avenue, the Creation of Parklets Near Downtown Burlingame Avenue, and the Temporary Street Closure of Broadway to Facilitate Safe Pedestrian Activity and Outdoor Dining Pursuant to the Latest San Mateo County Health Order**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the City Council hold a public hearing to consider:

- The extension of the temporary, Friday-Sunday street closure of Downtown Burlingame Avenue between El Camino Real and California Drive until the end of September;
- The creation of parklets along restaurant frontages within the parking lanes on Primrose Road, Park Road, Lorton Avenue, Howard Avenue, and Chapin Avenue; and
- The temporary, Saturday-Sunday closure of Broadway between Chula Vista Avenue and Capuchino Avenue.

## **BACKGROUND**

On June 9, 2020, the City Council held a special meeting to consider temporarily closing off Burlingame Avenue between El Camino Real and California Drive to facilitate safe outdoor dining and safe pedestrian activity. The City Council directed staff to implement the temporary closure for a period of one month before evaluating whether to extend it further. As part of the deliberations at the June 9, 2020 meeting, the City Council expressed an interest in creating parklets on side streets in the Downtown Burlingame Avenue area. Additionally, during the public hearing, the Broadway Business Improvement District (BID) President John Kevranian requested that the Council consider closing Broadway to facilitate outdoor dining similar to Burlingame Avenue.

On June 24, the Economic Development (ED) Subcommittee held a special meeting to discuss the parklets concept and options to allow additional outdoor dining along Broadway. Jenny Keleher, President of the Downtown Business Improvement District (DBID), Mr. Kevranian, and

Georgette Naylor, President and CEO of the Burlingame/SFO Chamber of Commerce, and Ajay Walia, owner of Rasa, attended the subcommittee meeting.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Burlingame Avenue Street Closure Update***

Per the City Council direction at the special meeting on June 9, 2020, staff implemented the one-month pilot street closure of Burlingame Avenue on the weekends of June 19-21 and June 26-June 28. The street will also be closed July 3-5. The pilot program will end on July 19, 2020 unless extended. Based on staff observation and input and feedback received from the public and the business community thus far, the street closure has been working successfully.

There have been concerns, however, about some members of the public not following social distancing guidelines and not wearing face coverings. As a result, staff has increased signage regarding the importance of wearing face coverings and maintaining safe social distancing and has included such messaging in the eNews. The DBID also added similar messaging to their street kiosks. In addition, at least one business owner is concerned that the closure is having a detrimental impact on his business. He and his employees report that the business is receiving far fewer customers than they were before the street closure. At the City's request, the DBID is in the process of conducting a survey of their members to obtain feedback, using questions drafted by City staff. Staff will share the survey results with the Council when they become available.

Since the initial weekends have proven successful, staff recommends extending the pilot program through the end of September. That should provide sufficient time to properly monitor traffic circulation and parking conditions as well as identify any safety issues that may arise. The extension will also allow adequate time to monitor the program and collect the necessary data to conduct CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) studies should the Council wish to continue the program on a long-term and/or seasonal basis in the future.

### ***Parklets on Side Streets in the Downtown Burlingame Avenue Area***

Parklets are public seating areas that convert curbside parking spaces into community spaces will still maintain uninterrupted and safe traffic circulation and access to businesses and parking facilities. At the June 24 ED Subcommittee meeting, staff presented options for parklets on the various side streets downtown. The Subcommittee agreed with the suggestions and recommends that the City Council consider allowing parklets on Primrose Road, Park Road, Lorton Avenue, Howard Avenue, and Chapin Avenue.

The attached plan shows the parklet concept and locations. The parklets would be created using heavy duty industrial plastic hydro-barriers that are typically used in construction to provide increased safety to parklet users. It is important to note the parklets will be in place every day, not just on weekends, as the barriers are more difficult to place and remove than the barriers used for the Burlingame Avenue weekend closure.

In addition to the previously estimated loss of parking on Burlingame Avenue of approximately 150 to 160 parking spaces when the street is closed on the weekends, the creation of parklets will result in a parking loss of up to approximately 60 to 70 spaces on side streets in the downtown area on both weekdays and weekends. This estimate is based on maximum utilization of parklets. The actual figures will be known after the City determines which restaurants wish to participate. Although there are parking facilities in the area that will still be available, there will certainly be times when parking is tight, and the City will hear complaints from visitors about lack of parking and from nearby neighbors about their streets being overrun with parkers.

### ***Broadway Street Closure***

At the June 24 special meeting, the ED Subcommittee discussed various options to facilitate outdoor dining on Broadway, ranging from creating parklets along Broadway in front of restaurants to fully closing off the street for motorists between California Drive and El Camino Real. At the City's request, the Broadway BID distributed a survey to Broadway merchants prior to the special meeting. The survey was originally intended to obtain input and determine whether merchants supported parklets on Broadway. However, due to concerns regarding the loss of parking, the Broadway BID added additional language seeking feedback on street closures. The initial survey feedback indicated mixed support for parklets, and there was considerably more support for a street closure on weekends.

After extensive discussions regarding both options, the ED Subcommittee remained concerned with both the potential traffic impacts from closing a busy street, as well as the loss of parking resulting from the creation of parklets (which would remain in place every day of the week). The ED Subcommittee directed staff to present both options to the BID and report back, as there was a concern that the BID survey respondents may have not properly understood the options since they had not seen renderings of the barriers or maps of where parklets might be installed. Staff attended a special BID meeting on June 26, 2020 and presented both options along with concept drawings. After reviewing and discussing the options, the BID members expressed strong support for the closure of Broadway from Chula Vista Avenue to Capuchino Avenue on a weekly basis from Friday at 4 PM to Sunday at 10 PM.

Broadway is a major east-west arterial street connecting US Highway 101 and El Camino Real, with heavy traffic volume and traffic congestion. Closing off Broadway would exacerbate the traffic congestion and may potentially increase safety concerns. Staff is concerned that closure of Broadway would detour the traffic onto nearby, narrow residential streets. Additionally, there are one-way side streets that cross Broadway, which may present traffic circulation and access issues to nearby residential properties and parking facilities. Closing Broadway off on weekends only (starting on Saturday mornings, rather than on Friday afternoons) may lessen those impacts as the traffic is observed to be generally lighter on weekends than weekdays.

On July 1, the ED Subcommittee held another special meeting to discuss this matter. The meeting was attended by BID President John Kevranian, and a representative from Gigi's Boutique on Broadway. The Subcommittee supported piloting the temporary closure of Broadway on weekends only, from Saturday at 8 a.m. to Sunday at 10 p.m. Both Mr. Kevranian

and Gigi's Boutique representative expressed the need and importance of having the street closed on Friday to allow for outdoor dining to help restaurants. After reviewing the needs of the restaurants, and analyzing concerns regarding potential traffic impacts resulting from street closure during rush hours on Friday evening, the Subcommittee recommended that Broadway be closed off from Saturday morning at 8 AM to Sunday at 10 PM, and monitor the conditions before considering any expansion to include Fridays, and/or make changes as needed, including stopping the closure if the conditions get worse.

The attached street closure plans shows Broadway closed off at Chula Vista Avenue, which would allow westbound traffic to detour at Chula Vista Avenue as well as at California Drive. Similarly, eastbound traffic would be closed off at Capuchino Avenue, which would provide an opportunity for detouring at both Capuchino Avenue and El Camino Real. Paloma Avenue and the northbound approach of Laguna Avenue would remain open to traffic for safe traffic circulation and to maintain access to residential properties and parking facilities. Laguna Avenue would be closed off at Rhinette Avenue to detour the southbound traffic because the southbound access currently terminates at Broadway. However, the northbound traffic on Laguna Avenue will be allowed to maintain safe circulation, and access to residential properties. Additionally, this will help reduce potential vehicular conflicts in that segment of the street.

The plan provides an approximately nine foot wide pedestrian area along the sidewalk on both sides of the street along the frontages of businesses and restaurants, which would satisfy ADA (Americans with Disability Act) requirements. The restaurants will be able to use the approximately 11 foot wide diagonal parking area along their frontages for outdoor dining purposes on both sides of the street. The middle part of the road, which is 24 feet wide (travel lanes), will be available for additional pedestrian activity and will serve as an emergency response access lane when needed.

Approximately 50 to 60 parking spaces would become unavailable on weekends if the City Council approves the temporary weekend closure of Broadway. As with the Burlingame Avenue commercial district, there are nearby parking facilities on either side of Broadway, but parking will become tight on busy weekends.

### **Next Steps**

Should the City Council approve adding parklets to the downtown side streets and closing Broadway on weekends as a pilot program, then interested restaurants must obtain an encroachment permit from the Public Works Department and adhere to all permit conditions and City requirements for using the public right-of-way as follows:

- All restaurants, eateries, retail businesses, and members of the public must abide by the State of California Health Orders with respect to social distancing, masks, etc.
- Restaurants must follow the County Health Orders for serving food, including providing PPE (personal protective equipment) for employees, and providing washing stations for patrons.
- All sales, service or consumption of alcoholic beverages shall be in compliance with the California Alcoholic Beverage Control Act as described in Division 9 of the California

Business and Professions Code and any implementing regulations or other applicable laws. Each restaurant using the City right-of-way for outdoor dining is responsible for the safety of their patrons. The City's existing sidewalk encroachment permit template can be adapted to cover the expanded dining areas and the City Council can direct that the City waive encroachment permit fees for outdoor dining during this program.

- The businesses must maintain ADA access at all times.
- Each restaurant using the outdoor dining space is responsible for keeping their frontage sidewalk and the parking lane areas clean at all times.
- All tables and chairs should be removed from the sidewalk and street at the end of each day.
- The DBID and Broadway BID will serve as liaisons for these projects and will coordinate with merchants and businesses to ensure all the conditions are met.

### ***Potential Cessation of the Programs Prior to the End of September***

Staff wishes to highlight for the City Council and the public that the City may remove any of the street closures or make adjustments if they are causing traffic congestion, circulation concerns, safety concerns, parking problems, and/or emergencies. Additionally, the City may remove any of the street closures or make adjustments if social distancing/face covering requirements are ignored. In addition, staff suggests the Council consider terminating either of the street closures or the parklets if 30 or more complaints are received from separate people/businesses concerning traffic safety, congestion, parking, and/or public health and safety.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There will be significant staff time and resources utilized to plan, set up and remove the traffic detour and road closure signage on a weekly basis and to respond to issues and manage the street closures and parklets. This will impact staff's regular duties and affect other City services and work programs. Staff estimates the cost of setting up and removing the street closure on Broadway to be similar to Burlingame Avenue, which is estimated at approximately \$10,000 to \$12,000 per month. Additionally, staff estimates the cost of renting and setting up barriers to create parklets is \$20,000 to \$30,000 per month. Regarding loss of parking revenue, staff estimates the overall loss is approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000 per month. The overall total fiscal impact of the pilot program is estimated to range from \$60,000 to \$80,000 per month. The actual figure may vary and will be determined after the completion of the pilot program.

#### **Exhibits:**

- Draft Parklet Plan for Side Streets in the Downtown Burlingame Avenue Area
- Draft Broadway Street Closure and Detour Plan
- Summary of BID Meeting Minutes
- Economic Development Subcommittee Meeting Minutes – Special Meeting June 24, 2020
- Economic Development Subcommittee Draft Meeting Minutes – Special Meeting July 1, 2020