



COUNCIL REPORT

DATE: October 11, 2022
CATEGORY: Public Hearing
DEPT.: Public Works
TITLE: **Castro Street Pedestrian Mall—Various Actions**

RECOMMENDATION

1. Adopt a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Mountain View Adopting a Negative Declaration for the Castro Street Pedestrian Mall Study in Accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, to be read in title only, further reading waived (Attachment 1 to the Council report).
2. Adopt a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Mountain View, Pursuant to California Streets and Highways Code Section 11311, Determining that Pedestrian Malls on Castro Street Between the East Leg of West Evelyn Avenue and Villa Street, Villa Street and West Dana Street, and West Dana Street and California Street Shall Be Established, to be read in title only, further reading waived (Attachment 3 to the Council report).
3. Introduce an Ordinance of the City of Mountain View Amending Chapter 27 of the Mountain View City Code to Add Article VI Establishing Pedestrian Malls on Castro Street Between the East Leg of West Evelyn Avenue and Villa Street, Villa Street and West Dana Street, and West Dana Street and California Street in the City of Mountain View, to be read in title only, further reading waived, and set a second reading for October 25, 2022 (Attachment 4 to the Council report).
4. Approve a midyear Capital Improvement Program project, Interim Pedestrian Mall Improvements, and transfer and appropriate \$1,500,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funding that was previously appropriated in the General Non-Operating Fund to the new project. (Five votes required)

BACKGROUND

In June 2020, Castro Street, between West Evelyn Avenue and California Street, was temporarily closed to vehicular traffic in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to support local businesses by facilitating outdoor dining. The success of the street closure was met with tremendous support

from businesses and the community. The lessons learned through the pandemic response and new activation of the street resulted in consideration to create a permanent pedestrian mall.

To permanently close one or more blocks of Castro Street, the City needs to comply with the 1960 Pedestrian Mall Law. On [June 28, 2022](#), the City Council took the first step in the process by adopting a Resolution of Intent to establish pedestrian malls on Castro Street between West Evelyn Avenue (east leg) and California Street ([Resolution No. 18686](#)), encompassing the 100, 200, and 300 blocks of Castro Street (Figure 1). The resolution identifies three pedestrian malls, one for each block of Castro Street, to be included. The next step in the process is for Council to conduct a public hearing. The Resolution of Intent identified the date of the public hearing as October 11, 2022.



Figure 1: Castro Pedestrian Malls

ANALYSIS

Environmental Review

An Initial Study and Negative Declaration (IS/ND) was prepared to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed Castro Street Pedestrian Mall in conformance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines (Attachment 1). The analysis determined that the proposed project would not have any significant impacts and no mitigation measures are required. The City issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to adopt the ND for a 20-day public review period from September 8, 2022 to September 28, 2022. Public notifications included a newspaper advertisement (*Daily Post*), email notifications to the project subscription list and neighborhood associations, mailers to property owners and tenants within 750' of the project, and multiple

signs posted along Castro Street between West Evelyn Avenue and California Street. Two comment letters were received during the public review period, including a letter from Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and another from a member of the public (Attachment 2). VTA's comments are editorial and do not change the environmental analysis or findings of the ND. The public commenter questioned the findings of the analysis with concerns that the proposed intersection operations would increase traffic congestion and pollutants and create a physical neighborhood land-use divide. Staff has reviewed all the comments, confirmed that the analysis adequately evaluated the proposed impacts under CEQA, and determined that no changes or additional analysis are required. Staff recommends that Council adopt the resolution adopting the ND for the Castro Street Pedestrian Mall (Attachment 1).

Establishment of Pedestrian Malls

The Resolution of Intent to establish the pedestrian malls set October 11, 2022 as the public hearing date. Property owners and tenants abutting the proposed pedestrian malls may protest or submit legal claims up to the time of the public hearing. If property owners representing more than 50% of frontage within a proposed pedestrian mall block submit a written protest, a pedestrian mall for that block cannot be established according to the Pedestrian Mall Law. If any written claims for damages are received from property owners or tenants, the City must resolve the claims before establishing the pedestrian malls. As of this report preparation, the City has not received any written protests or claims.

Staff recommends that Council adopt the resolution establishing the pedestrian malls (Attachment 3) if no written protests are received from property owners representing a majority of frontage within a proposed pedestrian mall block and no written claims for damages are received before the public hearing. If a majority protest and/or unresolved claims are received, staff recommends that Council defer adopting the resolution and continue the public hearing to a future Council meeting to be determined to provide an opportunity for the City to review the protests and/or claims.

Should the resolution be adopted, staff recommends that Council introduce the ordinance amending Chapter 27 of the City Code to add Article VI to establish the Castro Street pedestrian malls (Attachment 4). Key provisions of the ordinance are as follows:

- Establishes the boundaries of the pedestrian malls to be on Castro Street between the east leg of West Evelyn Avenue and Villa Street, between Villa Street and West Dana Street, and between West Dana Street and California Street.

- Prohibits motor vehicle traffic within the pedestrian mall boundaries at all times, except for emergency vehicles, which will be allowed at all times, and utility vehicles, garbage and recycling trucks, and commercial vehicles to perform work or services on the malls as authorized by the Public Works Director.
- Allows motor vehicles traveling along Villa Street and West Dana Street to cross Castro Street.

Interim Pedestrian Mall Implementation

In preparation for the possibility that pedestrian malls will be established, staff is developing an implementation plan for an interim pedestrian mall to be in place until a permanent pedestrian mall can be funded, designed, and constructed. Figure 2 provides an overview of the milestones for the interim pedestrian mall.

In August 2022, the Mayor approved the formation of a Council ad hoc committee to review and provide direction for the design standards/guidelines and implementation plan for the Interim Castro Street Pedestrian Mall. The first meeting of the ad hoc committee was held on September 21, 2022. The agenda materials and video recording of the meeting are available at MountainView.gov/PedMall.

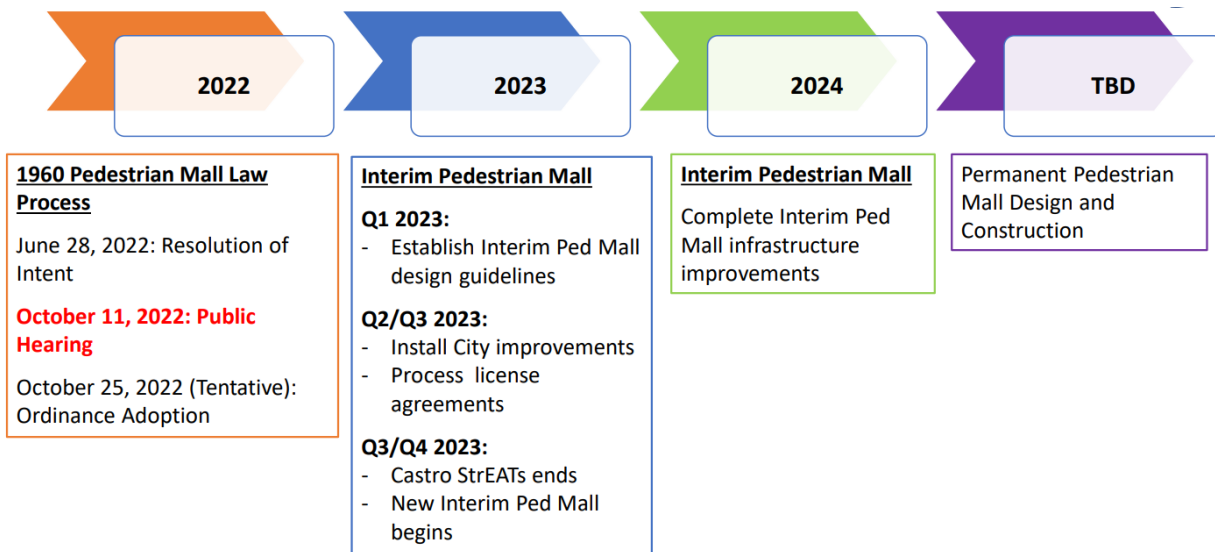


Figure 2: Interim Pedestrian Mall Implementation Timeline

The focus of the implementation plan is to strengthen the layout of the space as the street closure transitions from pandemic recovery to the interim pedestrian mall. The key elements for the interim pedestrian mall include a functional and program plan, interim design standards/guidelines, and City infrastructure improvements, which are described further below.

Functional and Program Plan

The functional plan (Figure 3) focuses on pedestrian connectivity and programming across the three blocks to invite more people to shop, dine, and gather in downtown. The key components of the functional plan are a “through zone” and a “program zone.”

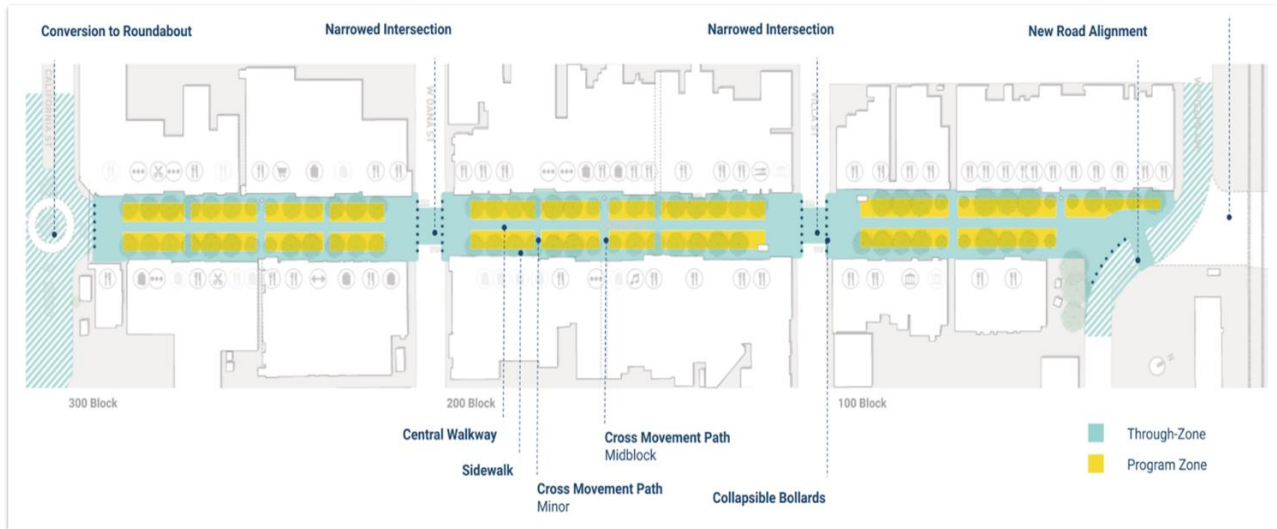


Figure 3: Proposed Functional Plan

The through zone facilitates safe and comfortable pedestrian access along all three blocks via sidewalks, a central walkway, and cross-movement paths (Figure 4).

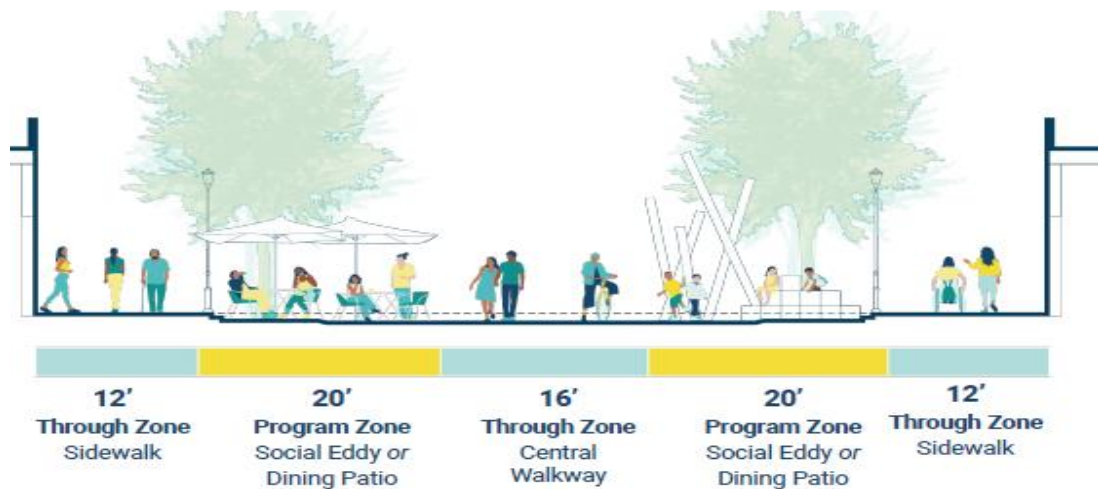


Figure 4: Through Zone

The program zones are designated spaces to provide a variety of programming opportunities that respond to the communal and commercial needs (Figure 5). Program zones include:

- Dining patios allocated to specific businesses for outdoor dining under license agreements;
- Social eddies provided by the City with seating, hang-out areas, and play spaces that are publicly accessible and free to use; and
- Service areas provided by the City with wayfinding information, bike/scooter parking, and/or trash bins.

To balance and diversify uses, it is recommended that each block have a minimum of one social eddy with public seating. The type of social eddy for each block should be based on the existing character, adjacent ground-floor uses, and opportunities for activation.

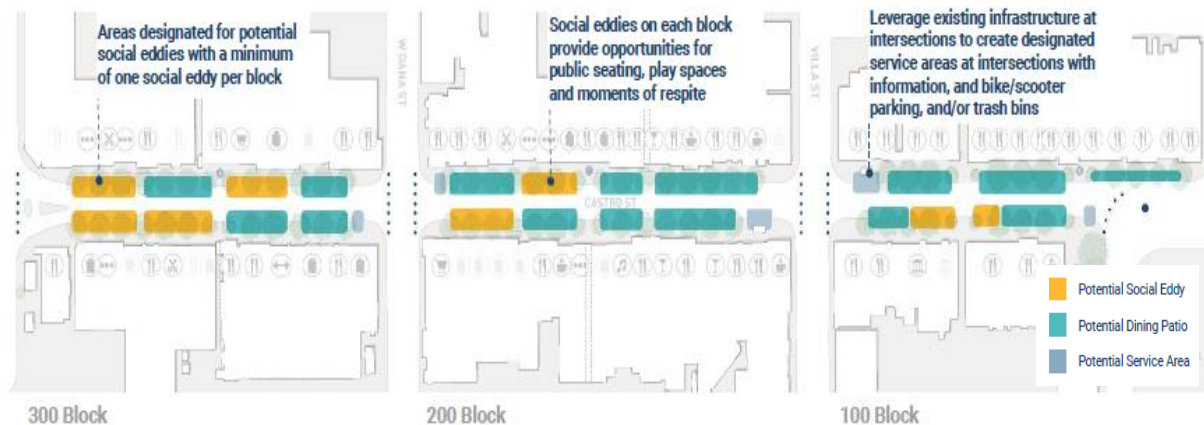


Figure 5: Program Zones

More detailed information about the proposed functional and program plan can be found at MountainView.gov/PedMall. The Council ad hoc committee was generally supportive of this approach for the interim pedestrian mall and will continue to review refinements to the functional and program plan before recommending final approval to the Council in early 2023.

Interim Design Standards/Guidelines

The interim design standards/guidelines will focus on providing consistency in the aesthetics, street furniture, and other features for the three blocks. The program zone furnishings would be designed to be freestanding and not bolted to the ground for ease of removal for regular street cleaning, maintenance purposes, and to support scheduling of special events. This also allows

for flexibility to adapt and change the location of social eddies if a change in adjacent ground-floor use occurs.

Staff is developing recommendations for a new patio license program (similar to the existing Sidewalk Café Program) that will include the standards/guidelines for furnishing options that are simple, unobtrusive, and convey a look and feel that is unified, consistent, and polished across the three blocks.

Business owners would be responsible for applying for use of a patio space and for implementing, operating, and maintaining their patios in accordance with the City's design standards/guidelines. To maintain consistency and provide cohesiveness across the three blocks, staff recommends that the City furnish and install patio barriers or delineators for the outdoor spaces that will also comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and California Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) requirements.

The Council ad hoc committee will review and provide input into the interim design standards/guidelines before recommending final approval to the City Council in early 2023. Staff is anticipating businesses will operate under the new standards/guidelines beginning in late summer or fall 2023. This will provide time for businesses to apply for patio spaces, execute license agreements with the City, and procure furniture and other amenities that are in compliance with the design standards/guidelines. It will also provide time for the City to make the necessary infrastructure improvements to establish the patio areas.

Interim Pedestrian Mall Infrastructure Plan

The implementation plan will also include providing infrastructure and other amenities to support the interim pedestrian mall. The following infrastructure and amenities are recommended:

- Traffic-rated bollards at intersections to protect the pedestrian malls from vehicles with some of the bollards being removable or retracting to allow emergency and service vehicle access;
- Patio barriers or delineators that comply with ADA and ABC requirements;
- ADA access ramps within the blocks to provide more connections between the sidewalk and the street levels;
- Service area equipment, such as bike racks, trash receptacles, and drinking fountains;
- Road repaving and ground markings to delineate central walkway and program zones;

- New wayfinding signs;
- Social eddy furnishings, such as seating, games, and play equipment;
- Improvements at the Castro Street/Villa Street and Castro Street/West Dana Street intersections, including narrowing the intersections to provide a single raised crosswalk for pedestrian safety, changing the traffic control devices at the intersections, and adding new loading zones adjacent to the intersections; and
- Converting the California Street/Castro Street intersection to a roundabout.

Staff received preliminary comments about the design and aesthetics of the improvements and amenities listed above from the Council ad hoc committee at their meeting on September 21, 2022. Staff will continue to develop the improvements and amenities, seeking further input from the ad hoc committee as well as from the businesses and community.

As part of the budget approval for Fiscal Year 2022-23, the City Council approved allocating \$1.5 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to transition the current Castro StrEATS program into the interim pedestrian mall. The uses of this funding as described in the adopted budget includes providing street furniture, lighting, street barriers, wayfinding, public activities, pedestrian crossing improvements at intersections, ADA ramps, and pick-up/drop-off areas. It is estimated that the \$1.5 million in ARPA funding is sufficient to implement most of the infrastructure and amenities recommended for the interim pedestrian mall; however, it will not fully fund the full implementation of the Castro Street/Villa Street and Castro Street/West Dana Street intersection improvements and the roundabout at the California Street intersection.

Staff recommends approving a midyear CIP project for the interim pedestrian mall to be funded by the \$1.5 million in ARPA funding. Supply chain challenges created by the pandemic continue to persist, and some items to be procured may take several months to arrive. The goal is to install many of the improvements and amenities by late summer or fall 2023, requiring that materials, such as the patio barriers or delineators, bollards, social eddy furnishings, and service area equipment, be ordered as soon as there is general concurrence from the Council ad hoc committee on the design and style. Creating the CIP project will provide the funding to procure these materials and begin design on the intersection improvements.

Outreach and Engagement

Staff presented information and received feedback regarding the Pedestrian Mall Law process and the interim pedestrian mall plan at meetings with the Downtown Business Association (August 17), Downtown Committee (September 6), Parks and Recreation Commission (September 14), and Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (September 28). Staff also scheduled virtual meetings in July and August 2022 with property owners along the three blocks

of Castro Street and conducted in-person office hours on Castro Street at various times to meet with the downtown businesses to keep them apprised of the pedestrian mall efforts.

Feedback received at these meetings and via email communication from residents have been supportive for establishing the pedestrian mall. Most of the comments received were on the draft functional and program plan, which are informing refinements to the plan.

Community and business outreach will continue as the design standards/guidelines and infrastructure plan are developed.

FISCAL IMPACT

The recommended actions to adopt the resolutions and introduce the ordinance will have no fiscal impact. The total cost for the infrastructure and amenities for the interim pedestrian mall is estimated to be in the range of \$4.5 million to \$5 million. The highest-cost element is the California Street roundabout at around \$3 million. This intersection improvement will be designed to be compatible with the permanent pedestrian mall improvements. Staff recommends approving a midyear CIP project in the amount of \$1.5 million using the ARPA funds approved in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Adopted Budget, which will be sufficient for most of the infrastructure improvements and amenities proposed for the interim pedestrian mall, including the design of the intersection improvements. Staff will return to Council at a later date to amend the CIP project budget to add the funding necessary to construct the intersection improvements.

CONCLUSION

Since June 2020, Castro Street, between West Evelyn Avenue and California Street, has been temporarily closed to vehicular traffic in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to support local businesses by facilitating outdoor dining within the City's right-of-way. The community and downtown businesses have indicated support for creating a permanent pedestrian mall along these three blocks of Castro Street. In response, the City Council took the first step to comply with the 1960 Pedestrian Mall Law by adopting a Resolution of Intent to establish a pedestrian mall for each of the three blocks. At the October 11, 2022 Council meeting, a public hearing will be held for the establishment of the pedestrian malls. At the conclusion of the public hearing, Council may adopt a resolution and introduce an ordinance to establish the pedestrian malls if there are no written protests from property owners representing a majority of frontage and no unresolved claims for damages.

In preparation for the possibility that a pedestrian mall will be established, staff has been developing an implementation plan for an interim pedestrian mall that will include a functional and program plan, design standards/requirements, and infrastructure improvements. Approving a midyear CIP project using the \$1.5 million in ARPA funds will allow staff to move forward with procurement and design as quickly as possible if the pedestrian mall ordinance is adopted.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Defer adopting the resolution and introducing the ordinance to establish the Castro Street Pedestrian Malls and continue the public hearing should there be written protests from property owners representing more than 50% of frontage within a proposed pedestrian mall block or any unresolved claims for damages.
2. Modify the resolution and/or ordinance.
3. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

The agenda was posted, notices were placed in the local newspapers (*Daily Post* and *Mountain View Voice*), email notifications were sent to neighborhood associations and the project subscription list, and mailers sent to property owners within a 750' radius.

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- Attachments:
1. Resolution to Adopt the Castro Street Pedestrian Mall Study Negative Declaration
 2. CEQA IS/ND Comments
 3. Resolution to Establish Pedestrian Malls
 4. Ordinance Amending Chapter 27 of City Code Establishing the Pedestrian Malls