

DATE: September 14, 2022

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Aruna Bodduna, Transportation Planner
Dawn S. Cameron, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: **Castro Street Pedestrian Mall**

RECOMMENDATION

Receive information about the Castro Street Pedestrian Mall project.

BACKGROUND

In June 2020, Castro Street, between 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 within these segments. The success and response to the street closure were met with tremendous support from businesses and the community. The lessons learned through the pandemic response and new activation of the street resulted in the consideration to create a permanent pedestrian mall.

To close one or more blocks of Castro Street permanently, the City must comply with the 1960 Pedestrian Mall Law. The first step of this law is to adopt a Resolution of Intent to establish a pedestrian mall. On [June 28, 2022](#), the City Council adopted a Resolution of Intent to establish a pedestrian mall on Castro Street, between Evelyn Avenue (east leg) and California Street (Resolution No. 18686).

ANALYSIS

Design and construction of a permanent pedestrian mall could take several years once the funding is identified. The project consultant, Gehl Studio, in coordination with staff, developed recommendations for interim conditions that could be put in place for the next three to five years until a permanent pedestrian mall can be implemented. The interim recommendations, described below, are designed to strengthen the layout of the space, provide clear standards/guidelines, and identify interim infrastructure needs as the street closure moves from pandemic recovery response to an interim closure phase.

Functional Plan

The Functional Plan (Figure 1) focuses on pedestrian connectivity and programming across the three blocks to help 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.”

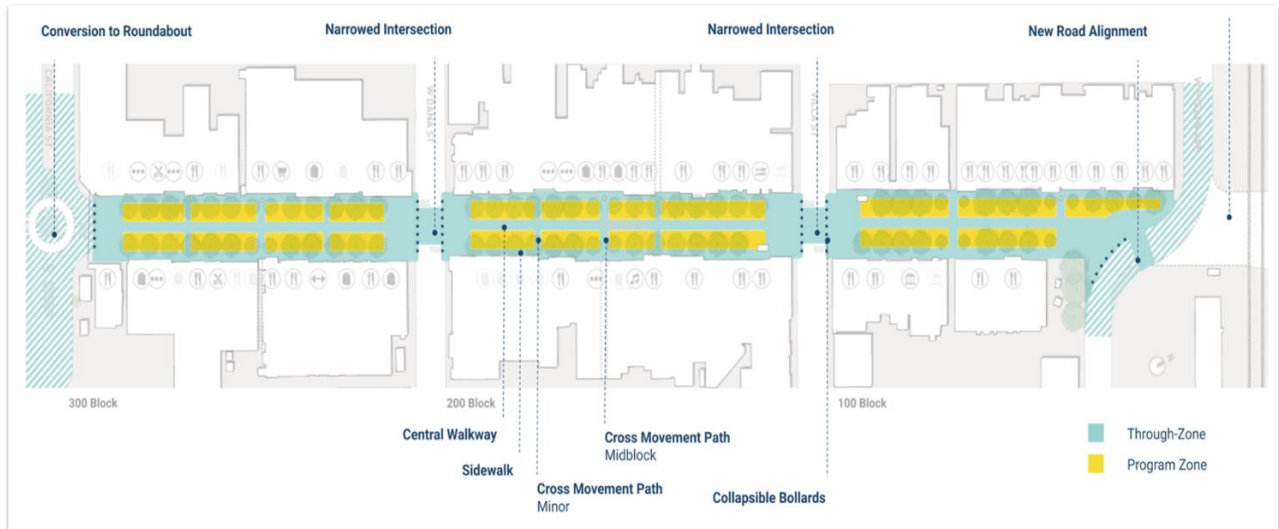


Figure 1: Proposed Functional Plan

- Through Zone facilitates safe and comfortable pedestrian access along all three blocks via sidewalks, a central walkway, and cross-movement paths (Figure 2).

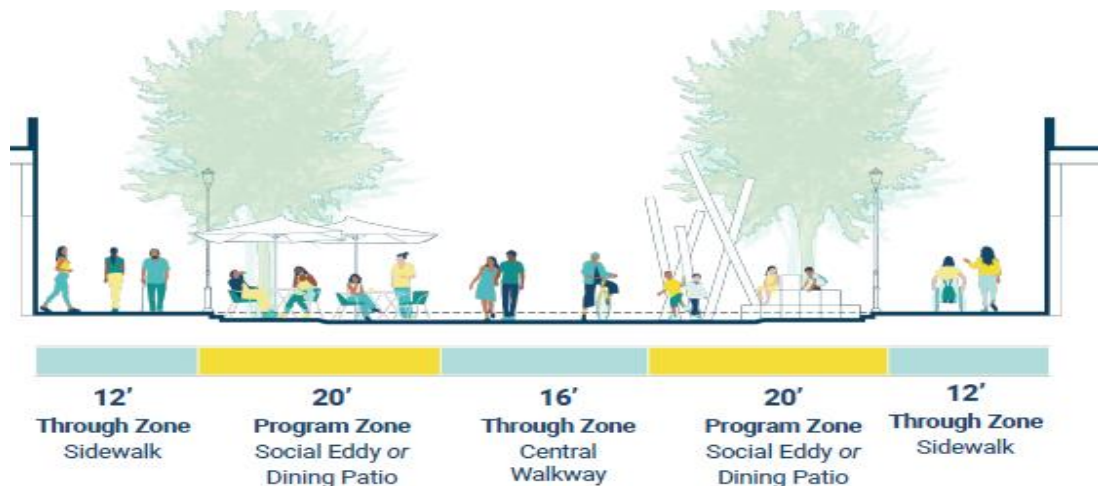


Figure 2: Through Zone

- **Program Zones** are designated spaces to provide a variety of programming opportunities that respond to communal and commercial needs (Figure 3). Program zones include “social eddies” with seating, hang-out areas, and play spaces that are publicly accessible and free to use; “dining patios” allocated to specific businesses for outdoor dining; and “service areas” with wayfinding information, bike/scooter parking, and/or trash bins that also serve as meeting points. To balance and diversify uses, it is recommended that each block have a minimum of one social eddy with a free public seating installation. The type of social eddy is specific for each block based on the existing character, adjacent ground-floor uses, and opportunities for activation.

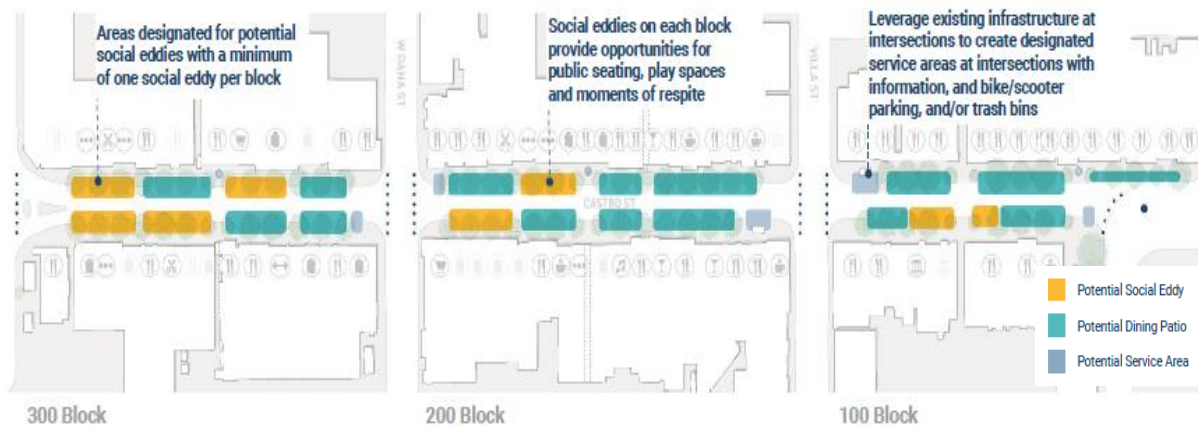


Figure 3: Program Zones

Interim Design Standards/Guidelines

The interim design standards/guidelines focus on providing consistency in the aesthetics, street furniture, and other features for the three blocks. The program zone furnishings are designed to be freestanding and not bolted to the ground for ease of removal for street cleaning and regular maintenance purposes. 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 in the process of developing the new patio permit program (similar to the existing Sidewalk Café Program) that will include the standards/guidelines for a kit of parts that are simple, unobtrusive, and convey a look and feel that is unified, consistent, and polished across the three blocks. Business owners will be responsible for applying for patio permits, implementing, operating, and maintaining their patios following these design standards/guidelines. This will be included for Council consideration at a future meeting.

Interim Infrastructure Plan

This plan includes infrastructure and other street improvements to support the street closure. The infrastructure improvements include, but are not limited to, bollards, planters, other traffic-control devices, cross-street intersection improvements, street furniture, lighting, and accessibility improvements. Staff's goal is to recommend infrastructure improvements that can be carried over into the permanent pedestrian mall reconstruction project. Staff is in the process of developing cost estimates for the proposed infrastructure improvements that will be included as part of the budget request for implementation. Once the budget is approved, staff will develop a detailed implementation plan.

The Castro Pedestrian Mall functional and program plan draft report is available on the project webpage at www.mountainview.gov/pedmall. This report describes the above elements in detail and provides an inspirational catalog for social eddy installations.

DISCUSSION

Commission input is sought on the following:

- Feedback on the proposed interim plan; and
- Feedback on the social eddy installations.

NEXT STEPS

The next step in the pedestrian mall law process is for the City Council to conduct a public hearing, which is set for October 11, 2022.

Environmental clearance documentation for the project is under way and will be available on the project webpage in September 2022.

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