



**DATE:** June 9, 2020

**CATEGORY:** Consent

**DEPT.:** Public Works; Community Development

**TITLE:** **Resolution Closing Castro Street and Modifying Parking Restrictions**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Adopt a Resolution Temporarily Suspending and Designating Parking Restrictions and Prohibitions Pursuant to Mountain View City Code Chapter 19 and Temporarily Closing the 100, 200, 300, and 400 Blocks of Castro Street to Motor Vehicle Traffic Pursuant to California Vehicle Code Section 21101 to Facilitate Outdoor Dining, to be read in title only, further reading waived (Attachment 1 to the Council report).

### **BACKGROUND**

Since initial news about the community spread of COVID-19 in Santa Clara County, restaurants and small businesses have experienced substantial financial losses, which have accelerated since the shelter-in-place order was enacted. The March 17, 2020 Santa Clara County Public Health Order greatly reduced businesses' ability to maintain regular operations impacting revenue and staff. Businesses had to close or stay open with reduced staff and customer access.

On June 1, 2020, the Santa Clara County COVID-19 shelter-in-place order was modified to allow outdoor dining at restaurants starting on June 5, 2020. However, indoor dining continues to be prohibited, which severely reduces restaurants' capacity and ability to recover financially over the critical summer season.

The June 1 order places the following restrictions on outdoor dining:

1. Outdoor seating arrangements shall limit the number of patrons at a single table to no more than six individuals, all of whom must be from the same household or living unit. Members of separate households or living units are not allowed to dine at the same table.

2. All tables must be separated to ensure that 6' minimum social distance can easily be maintained between all members of separate households or living units at all times. For clarity, patrons who are members of the same household or living unit and seated together at a table do not need to be 6' apart.
3. Alcohol may be sold to patrons in conjunction with a meal, but it may not be sold independently.
4. Bar areas must remain closed to customers.
5. Entertainment events are not allowed at this time.
6. Outdoor dining, placement of outdoor seating arrangements, and food service must be in compliance with local laws, regulations, and permitting requirements.
7. Facilities that open for outdoor dining must offer curbside pickup, takeaway, and/or delivery service alternatives.

### Street Dining Programs

Staff has been tracking efforts in other cities where local governments are implementing or considering street dining efforts to support the recovery of local businesses. These efforts typically involve closing streets to motor vehicles in order to provide space for restaurants or retail stores to expand their activities onto the roadway while facilitating social distancing by patrons, pedestrians, and active transportation users. Examples include the planned Al Fresco program in San José; Lift Up Local in Tampa, Florida; and similar programs under consideration in San Mateo, Redwood City, Palo Alto, and Jersey City. Scenes from already implemented programs (outside of California) are displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: On-Street Dining in Tampa (left) and Indianapolis (right)**



## **Community Support**

The City has received numerous requests for implementation of a similar program along Castro Street in Downtown Mountain View. Staff has also presented this concept to the Downtown Committee, the Downtown Association, and Mountain View Chamber of Commerce. Each of these bodies has expressed support for the concept of closing Castro Street to motor vehicles in order to facilitate restaurant recovery and social distancing. Staff continues to meet with the downtown businesses to discuss the closure and business needs.

Staff has formed a committee with representatives from Public Works, Community Development, Community Services, Police, Fire, City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office, and Finance and Administrative Services to develop and implement a proposed program.

## **ANALYSIS**

Staff has analyzed what it would take to support the recovery of Mountain View's downtown businesses through closure of Castro Street to allow for social distancing while dining on-street. Under the street closure proposal, customers would be encouraged to enjoy their food at tables and chairs on the roadway; however, consistent with the shelter-in-place order, people would be encouraged not to gather or linger in the area beyond the time that they are patronizing restaurants or stores.

## **Proposed Castro Street Closure**

Staff proposes that Castro Street between Evelyn Avenue and Mercy Street (100 to 400 blocks) be closed through September 30, 2020. As shown in Figure 2, side streets would be open to facilitate east-west travel across Castro Street. These movements include VTA bus access as well as access to curbside pickup areas for takeout and retail establishments.

**Figure 2: Proposed Street Closure**

The 500 to 900 blocks of Castro Street (between Mercy Street and El Camino Real) will remain open to vehicular traffic during the summer. There are no restaurants or stores along the 500 block, and there are already outdoor eating areas in front of most restaurants in the 600 to 900 block. As part of the program, additional outdoor dining and short-term curbside pickup areas may also be provided along the 600 to 900 blocks by temporarily converting parking areas to parklets for outdoor dining, or short-term (24-minute) parking zones from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for the duration of the program.

### **On-Street Dining Program Operations**

For on-street dining, the basic concept is to set up tables and chairs along the sides of the roadway with a central aisle as a pedestrian and bicycle zone. The tentative layout

includes signage, bollards, and barricades located at each end of the closed blocks to close the street to vehicular traffic. Staff is working on the design of signage and other aesthetic and informational elements.

Staff recommends a food court style layout where the City provides tables and chairs for shared use by restaurants along Castro Street as well as participating restaurants on adjacent side streets. Restaurants with an existing sidewalk café permit would also continue to operate their own tables and chairs within the flex zone (parking/sidewalk café area), provided that they adhere to social-distancing requirements in these areas also.

Staff is utilizing services from Gehl Studios, who is conducting the Castro Street Pedestrian Mall Feasibility Study, to develop potential street layouts, including table placements, pedestrian walkways, bollards, sanitation stations, and pavement marking. This proposed design will incorporate accessible paths of travel for pedestrians with varying abilities both along the existing sidewalks as well as the central aisle of the street.

The City would provide tables and chairs, garbage and recycling containers, handwashing stations, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant portable restrooms.

### **Role of Restaurants**

Under the June 1, 2020 order, restaurants are depending on outdoor dining to support their business operations since this order limits restaurants to takeout service. While some businesses have outdoor dining through private patios or the City's Sidewalk Café Permit, creating more outdoor seating on Castro Street provides customers an opportunity to dine downtown while maintaining social distancing. Staff is continuing discussions about partnering with the downtown businesses to help maintain the tables and chairs and keep the surfaces clean in accordance with County guidelines and requirements. Restaurant staff would also work to ensure that the area is free from trash.

### **Transportation and Access**

Temporary street closure of the 100, 200, 300, and 400 blocks of Castro Street requires traffic-control changes that are outlined in a traffic-control plan developed by the City Traffic Engineer. Under the temporary conditions, it is expected that traffic along Castro Street would be diverted to parallel routes such as Shoreline Boulevard, Hope Street, and Bryant Street. Given the lower-than-usual traffic volumes, it is not

anticipated that this diverted traffic will result in capacity concerns or unacceptable vehicular volumes at intersections along parallel routes.

Additionally, staff is developing a plan to provide additional short-term parking spaces in the City-owned parking lots and garages for curbside pickup from both restaurants and retail establishments behind Castro Street.

To suppress parking demand and encourage access by active transportation modes, staff is investigating options for increased bicycle parking in the vicinity of Castro Street. The Mountain View Community Shuttle will continue to operate along its usual route, which provides non-automobile access to downtown. Staff has also been working with VTA to reroute bus services and move bus stops for the duration of this program.

### **Risk Management**

Staff proposes that each participating restaurant enter into a waiver and indemnification agreement with the City, which will also waive subrogation of rights with respect to workers compensation for restaurant participation in the program.

All the restaurants have insurance for their establishments and outside café areas and liquor liability if applicable, and the City would not relieve the restaurant owners from maintaining insurance. However, the City is self-insured for liability claims and allowing a food court concept could introduce a risk of liability from customers participating in the program.

### **Resolution**

The California Vehicle Code authorizes local authorities to temporarily close a portion of any street for celebrations, parades, local special events, and other purposes by adoption of a resolution when the closing is necessary for the safety and protection of persons who are to use that portion of the street during the temporary closing. In this case, temporary closure of Castro Street is needed to provide for the outdoor dining area discussed above. In addition, the California Vehicle Code authorizes the City to prohibit or restrict parking under various circumstances. Under Chapter 19 of the Mountain View City Code, changes to parking prohibitions or restrictions occur by Council resolution. The proposed resolution addresses these requirements and will allow staff to proceed with the Castro Street closure, convert parking areas along Castro Street to parklets, and provide additional short-term parking spaces in the City-owned off-street parking facilities in order to provide space for and accommodate outdoor dining.

## **Next Steps**

Various details related to this effort still need to be addressed. Staff will continue to refine tentative design concepts, operations, logistics, and agreements associated with the proposed program. Staff will also continue to work with downtown businesses in relation to the role of businesses in this program.

The tentative timeline to begin the proposed temporary Castro street closure is the week of June 22, 2020. The exact date will be dependent on securing the tables and chairs and working out arrangements with the restaurants for their employees to help maintain the outdoor dining areas.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

A cost estimate to implement the street closure and on-street dining program is still under development. The anticipated costs include renting or buying tables and chairs, producing signage, renting portable handwashing and restrooms, supplementary janitorial support, and increased solid waste collection efforts. Live Nation has agreed to loan their bollards and barricades, and staff is looking for opportunities to borrow tables and chairs. Staff is also working with restaurants for their partnership in this effort by having their employees assist with table set up and take down as well as bussing and sanitation of tables during the day.

## **CONCLUSION**

The goal for temporarily closing Castro is to provide outdoor dining space for downtown restaurants to support their economic recovery and re-enliven downtown. The outdoor dining will be implemented in compliance with the most current County Public Health shelter-in-place order and State guidelines. Staff is recommending that the Council adopt a resolution allowing for the temporary closure of Castro Street and modifying certain parking restrictions to support the closure, allow for converting parking areas to parklets, and provide new curbside pick-up locations. Staff is working toward a tentative timeline for the closure to commence during the week of June 22, 2020 and continue through September 30, 2020.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Do not approve the resolution.
2. Adopt an alternative resolution.

3. Provide other direction to staff.

**PUBLIC NOTICING**

Agenda posting and e-mail distribution to Downtown Committee and Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee along with the Downtown Association, Mountain View Chamber of Commerce, and Old Mountain View Neighborhood Association.

Prepared by:

Ria Hutabarat Lo  
Transportation Manager

Tiffany Chew  
Business Development Specialist

Approved by:

Audrey Seymour Ramberg  
Assistant City Manager/  
Chief Operating Officer

Reviewed by:

Dawn S. Cameron  
Public Works Director

Aarti Shrivastava  
Assistant City Manager/Community  
Development Director

RHL-TC/TS/5/CAM  
947-06-09-20CR  
200304

Attachment: 1. Resolution