REQUEST FOR DIRECTION
Subject: Annual Seasonal Pedestrian Zone

Presented to: Governance and Finance

Date: December 18, 2023

Submitted by: Darren Enns,
Director, Planning and Environment

Item #: 4.3

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION
That Governance and Finance provide direction on an annual, seasonal pedestrian zone.

BACKGROUND
Reason for Report
At the December 5, 2022, Governance and Finance meeting, the following motion was passed:

FIN22-333 Moved by Mayor DiManno That with respect to Item 4.2.1, Banff Avenue Pedestrian Zone - Concept, the following be approved: That the Governance and Finance Committee recommend that Council approve concept development for $70,000 and a community input process for $25,000 in 2023 to be funded through the Economic Recovery Reserve.

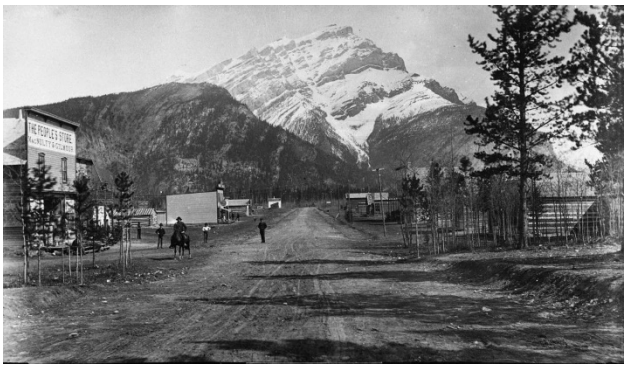
For: (5): Mayor DiManno, Councillor Canning, Councillor Olver, Councillor Pelham, Councillor Ram
Against: (2): Councillor Christensen and Councillor Pettigrew
MOTION CARRIED

This report is intended to provide an overview of how this direction was implemented and what the options are for Governance and Finance with respect to next steps. The report is divided into four parts:

- Part 1: Evolution of Banff Avenue;
- Part 2: Community input;
- Part 3: Future capital options; and,
- Part 4: Next steps.

Summary of Issue

Part 1: Evolution of Banff Avenue
Banff Avenue, and its historical alignment with Cascade Mountain, has been an anchor of our community's design since its inception in the late 19th century. Its important to note that there is no singular design for Banff Avenue, and that over time the street has been built and rebuilt multiple times, always in response to the values of each specific time period. Below is an overview of some these interventions and their associated design elements.



In the early 1900s, the wide street and unpaved surface would have accommodated teams of horses being able to turn around without impediment.

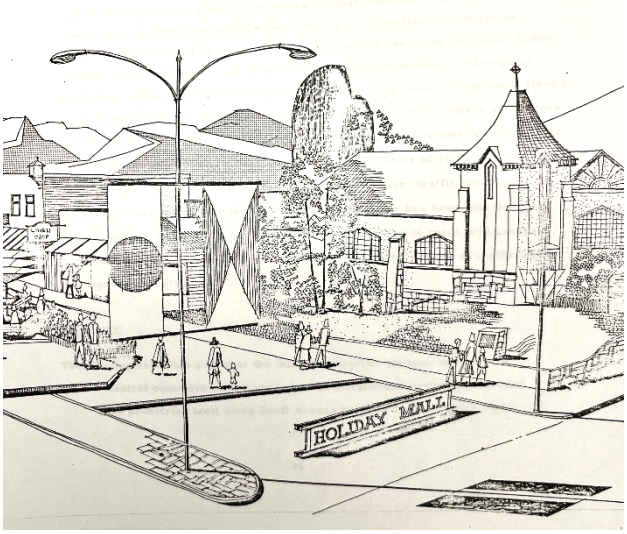
images www.prairie-towns.com

By 1915, five years after the ban on cars in the park ended, investments were being made in wooden sidewalks and the first paved surface. Additionally, landscaping trees were protected and overhead utility lines introduced to service a growing commercial sector.

In 1935, 13 years after the opening of the Banff-Windermere highway connecting Alberta and BC, the country was in the grips of the great depression. Numerous public works campaigns were underway in the National Park and Banff Avenue benefited from the construction of a landscaped median, complete with stone plinths and other beautification measures. Angled parking was added to each side, with single lanes of traffic headed north and south

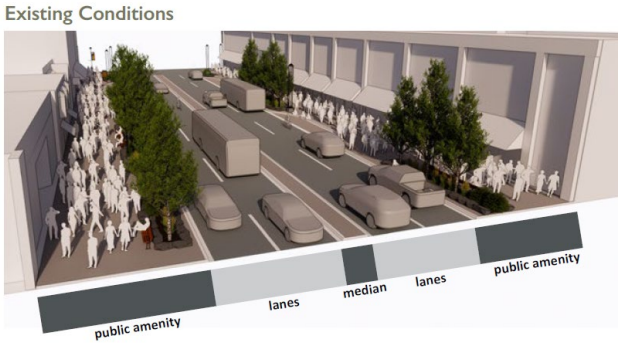
By 1940 Banff Avenue was transformed again, with the landscaped median replaced by a more utilitarian traffic divider, which included bicycle parking, decorative lighting, and what one can assume was a rundlestone flagstones.

By the mid-1950s, angled parking along the street had been replaced with parallel parking, 2 lanes of traffic were present in each direction and the central traffic divider was adorned with highway-style overhead lighting. This was the post-war era of booming growth in Canada and the golden age of vehicle ownership. Banff Avenue would remain largely in the same configuration until the 1990s.



1961 saw the federal government commission renowned town planner Peter Oberlander to produce an "Urban Development Plan" for Banff, which was focussed on a pedestrian commercial area on the 100 block of Banff Avenue between Buffalo and Caribou Street. The intent of Oberlander's pedestrian zone was to "restore Banff Avenue to its true purpose, namely to provide ample space for the shopper and casual visitor "to see" and "be seen", and to select goods and services at leisure wherever they may be provided.

After Banff's incorporation as a Town in 1990, one of the first projects embarked on was a downtown enhancement plan that focussed on converting vehicular space to an improved pedestrian realm. The project was not without controversy, and as a tool to test these changes out, prototypes were tested out first in a temporary format, and later in the form of trial infrastructure such as the area in front of the Clock Tower Mall shown below. These trials and tests led to the development of Banff Refreshing, the comprehensive reconstruction of Banff Avenue in 2007.



In 2007-2008, the Banff Refreshing project completely rebuilt the underground infrastructure for Banff Avenue, expanded pedestrian sidewalks, and introduced an amenity zone of landscape, seating, and infrastructure to separate pedestrians from vehicle traffic. The anticipated lifespan of this investment varies by each component, with underground infrastructure expected to last multiple decades, whereas some surface elements have already been replaced.

In 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Banff Avenue was converted into a summer pedestrian zone to allow for space for pedestrians to social distance, and also allow for businesses to occupy public space in order to offset impacts from public health measures. This included providing space for additional landscaping, seasonal seating, and starting in 2021, public transit. In late 2021, Council directed that the pedestrian zone continue for an additional 2 years (2022 and 2023) as an economic recovery measure.

Part 2: Community Input

A community input process was prepared that reflected Council's Strategic Plan goal to "Foster Connections; Building Relationships and Partnerships" as well as elements of Council's (draft) Public Input Policy. In general, the consultation process was designed to:

- Create awareness about the past changes on Banff Avenue and principles guiding decisions;
- Provide in-person and online methods people could use to provide input;

- Offer opportunities for residents and visitors to identify benefits and concerns with the pedestrian zone in the past;
- Create a forum for a nuanced conversation and sharing of perspectives, as opposed to a "for/against" response; and,
- Report back to Council and the community on what we heard.

The first stage of community input sought to raise awareness around the process and highlight opportunities for the public to provide feedback. This promotion involved:

- Advertisements in the "Town Page" in the *Rocky Mountain Outlook*;
- Dedicated full-page advertisements in the *Rocky Mountain Outlook*;
- Mountain FM radio advertising;
- "Pop-up" events throughout the community in order to raise awareness and drive people to an online survey instrument and / or registration for a workshop;
- 400 postcards distributed in various locations in town;
- Social media promotion, including bistro contest;
- Dedicated project web page in Banff.ca and BanffViewpoints.ca;
- Signage within public spaces; and,
- Notification in three newsletters to subscribed residents (about 980 residents); and
- Notification in other local newsletters (e.g. BLLT and BLLHA

Town of Banff information

Pedestrian Zone feedback

What did you like and not like about the Banff Avenue Pedestrian Zone? Give feedback in the online survey by November 27 or register for the Banff Avenue Pedestrian Zone Public Workshop on Tuesday, November 21. Learn more about the continuous improvement of Banff Avenue over the decades, challenges and opportunities downtown, and give feedback about the pedestrian zone and future design options for Banff Avenue. Complete the survey and register for the workshop at BanffViewpoints.ca/BanffAve

Third Quarter 2023 Utility Bills

The Utility Bills for the July 1 and September 30, 2023 billing period were mailed on October 31, 2023 and are due November 30, 2023. If you have not received your bill, please contact

Subscribe to newsletters

Subscribe to Town of Banff news in your inbox. Visit BanffViewpoints.ca for weekly updates, latest news, feedback opportunities, housing updates and more.

Banff Senior Citizens Society Functional Fitness Class

November 13 – December 18
Mondays, 10 – 11 a.m.
The Town of Banff and Banff Senior Citizens Society are offering a new gentle fitness class for folks 55+. Join this 6-week program with a clinical exercise physiologist to focus on strength, balance, and mobility. Cost: $50. Email BanffViewpoints.ca/BanffAve to register.

Santa Claus Celebration of Lights

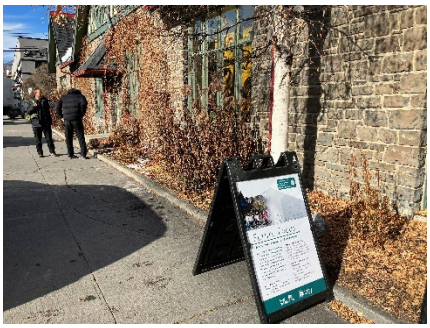
Saturday, November 18
Banff Avenue will be closed between Buffalo Street and Wolf Street for the all-day celebration to kick off the festive season, featuring performances, displays and special treats from local businesses. Visit BanffViewpoints.ca/BanffAve for more information.

"Town page" advertising in newspaper

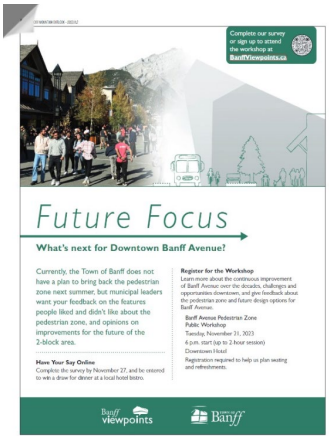
"Pop-up" event

Signage

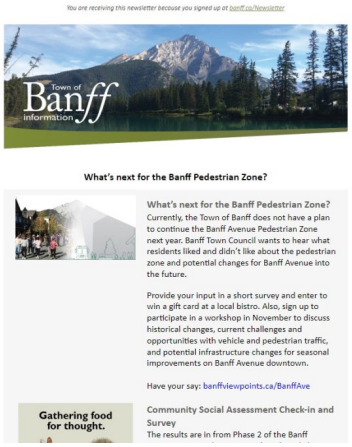
"Pop-up" event


Signage

Social media post



Full page ad – Outlook



Newsletter to subscribed residents

Promotion was focussed on encouraging people to participate in one or more of three main channels:

1. An online survey tool;
2. A public workshop; and / or,
3. Dedicated focus groups for smaller cohorts.

Approximately 250 people were engaged in seven pop-up sessions and Administration collected input from 1,637 people participating in the online survey tool, an oversubscribed public workshop (160 participants), and 98 participants at five focus group meetings. A "What We Heard" report is included as Attachment 1 to this report and a high-level summary is provided below.

Main Themes

The sections below provide highlights from each of the three public input channels. Common across all channels were some main themes summarized for consideration in deciding about the future of Banff Avenue:

- Participants generally acknowledged the impact on Banff from increased visitation and that a pedestrian zone helps deal with 30,000-40,000 pedestrians a day on Banff Avenue in peak summer, but there are some who do not believe the benefits for visitor pedestrians are worth the perceived challenges caused by the pedestrian zone.
- The range of benefits cited for the pedestrian zone was greater than the number of challenges identified. Among these were room for pedestrians, ambiance, abundance of outdoor dining and economic benefits to businesses.
- Although there were fewer mentions of different attributes of the pedestrian zone that people believed caused problems, the conviction was very strong for those who identified the two main challenges identified with the pedestrian zone:
    - The direct impact of more traffic detoured around Banff Avenue and onto Beaver Street, Lynx Street and spill over on Muskrat Street (with two sub-impacts of traffic affecting people who live on those streets, and for drivers whose travel time is increased due to the detour);

    - The impact of the pedestrian zone on traffic congestion on the south side of the Bow River Bridge (with sub-impacts of contributing to delays for north-bound drivers and the elsewhere in town)
- Secondary benefits identified for the pedestrian zone that are also worth considering include decrease in vehicle noise and air pollution, and more frequently used route by residents, as opposed to using back alleys.
- Secondary challenges identified for the pedestrian zone that are also worth considering include the impact on housing demand of sidewalk seating associated with restaurants in the pedestrian zone, safety concerns with buses, bikes, ebikes and skateboards in a pedestrian area, and perceptions about the impact on safety and efficiency of evacuations in the case of wildfire emergency.
- The decision on the future of the pedestrian zone depends on weighing the benefits and the direct problems identified. It is important to recognize that the impact of attributes (beneficial or problematic) affect different people in different ways, and trade-offs will be made for either decision.
- Mitigations for the problems identified in the public input processes should continue to be explored, regardless of the decision on the future of the pedestrian zone. This should include community discussion and understanding of emergency access to southside residents and businesses, and evacuation during periods of traffic congestions – with or without a pedestrian zone.

Online Survey

As noted above, the response rate to the online survey tool was very strong with 1,637 participants, of which almost 65% (1,042) self-identified as Banff residents. The survey instrument asked questions around level of agreement with Banff's high-level transportation goals, experience with the Bear Street pedestrian-friendly hub, opinions about benefits and challenges associated with the 2020 – 2023 pedestrian zones, and projected impacts associated with or without a future annual, seasonal pedestrian zone.

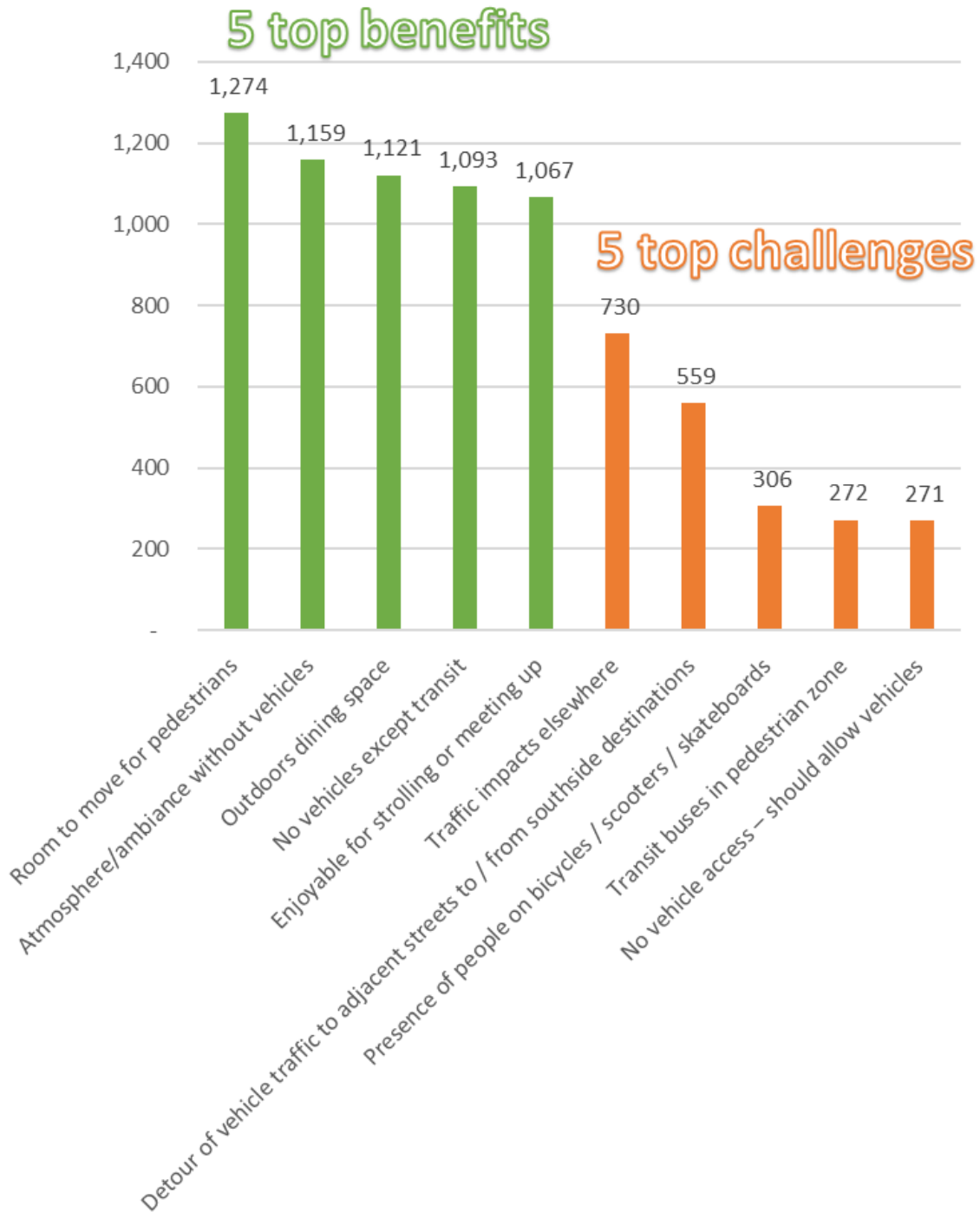
Administration would highlight the following from the online survey. Of the Banff respondents (excluding people who reported living outside the Town of Banff):

- There was broad agreement with high-level goals around active transportation with 92% agreeing that "The Town of Banff should continue its efforts to reduce reliance on visitor vehicles in town" and 91% agreeing that "I support the Town of Banff's goal to promote and support walking, cycling and taking transit."
- Experiences with other pedestrianized environments (e.g. Bear Street shared street) reflected a mix of feedback, with the majority of 851 comments supporting the pedestrian-friendly commercial area, but also many reporting problems they see with the shared street and some suggesting improvements to its function;
- The characteristics identified by **Banff respondents** as benefits of the 2020 – 2023 pedestrian zones were broadly distributed and more numerous than challenges. The top 5 benefits were cited:
    - Room to move for pedestrians (772 responses)
    - Atmosphere/ambiance without vehicles (684 responses)
    - Outdoors dining space (670 responses)

    - No vehicles except transit (653 responses)
    - Enjoyable for strolling or meeting up (641 responses)
- Areas of concern with the 2020 – 2023 pedestrian zones identified by **Banff respondents** were clustered primarily around topics related to traffic and transportation. The top 5 areas of concern were:
    - Traffic impacts elsewhere (533 responses)
    - Detour of vehicle traffic to adjacent streets to / from southside destinations (483 responses)
    - No vehicle access – should allow vehicles (215 responses)
    - Presence of people on bicycles / scooters / skateboards (180 responses)
    - Inconvenient access to destination (171 responses)

For overall results (including people living in Canmore and outside Banff):

- Positive impressions of the 2020 – 2023 pedestrian zones remained broadly distributed and more numerous than challenges. The top 5 benefits were the same as for residents:
    - Room to move for pedestrians (1,274 responses)
    - Atmosphere/ambiance without vehicles (1,159 responses)
    - Outdoors dining space (1,121 responses)
    - No vehicles except transit (1,093 responses)
    - Enjoyable for strolling or meeting up (1,067 responses)
- Areas of concern with the 2020 – 2023 pedestrian zones were mainly related to traffic and transportation. The top 5 areas of concern were the same as for residents, with a change of order for the third ranked item and a new complaint about transit buses in the pedestrian zone, replacing "inconvenient access to destination" in the order of challenges cited:
    - Traffic impacts elsewhere (730 responses)
    - Detour of vehicle traffic to adjacent streets to / from southside destinations (559 responses)
    - Presence of people on bicycles / scooters / skateboards (306 responses)
    - Transit buses in pedestrian zone (272 responses)
    - No vehicle access – should allow vehicles (271 responses)



More details are included in Attachment 1 – the What We Heard Report, and the link to Verbatim Comments and summaries on the project website.

Public Workshop

A second consultation initiative was a public workshop held on Tuesday, November 21, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Banff Park Lodge. The workshop was well attended, with more than 160 participants, which was 20 over the number of pre-registered users. (For reference, the Phase 1 visitor paid parking workshop had 80 attendees.) No non-registered attendees were turned away from the Pedestrian Zone Workshop.

The workshop was structured in a "world café" format where participants engaged in facilitated peer-to-peer conversations at tables of 10 people, and reported back their discussions on key topics to the broader group through their facilitators. The structure of questions and topics covered the benefits / challenges of the 2020 – 2023 pedestrian zones, an exercise around predicting what future years might look like without a pedestrian zone, and finishing up with providing feedback on the concept drawings referenced in Part 3 of this report and any suggestions for the future of Banff Avenue and surrounding areas.

Administration received a range of feedback on the workshop as a tactic, and would like to highlight the following outcomes:

- There were positive comments in support of a deliberative process where people could share and discuss different perspectives;
- There was a high degree of consistency with the online survey results in terms of the main things people liked about the pedestrian zone or attributes many did not like about the pedestrian zone;
- Discussions showed that people who were in support of having a pedestrian zone could also identify challenges or issues with having Banff Avenue closed to vehicles, and, conversely, people who were opposed to continuing a pedestrian zone on Banff Avenue could identify benefits to residents and/or visitors with the pedestrian zone;
- There was widespread concern for traffic impacts in Banff, but differences of opinion on the degree to which the pedestrian zone contributed to congestion; and
- There was criticism of the last section of the workshop in which the Town requested feedback on the concepts prepared for Council because many believed this contradicted an openness to consider a future with or without a pedestrian zone; some thought it suggested that a decision had been made to proceed with some form of pedestrian zone in the future.

One area for reflection was whether or not multiple workshops could have been held. This was initially considered but resources and time constraints led to a decision for a single workshop.

Focus Groups

A third tactic was a series of smaller "focus group" sessions held in late November / early December. Specifically, focus groups were held with:

- Banff Residents 18-30 years old (Nov. 27, Catharine Robb Whyte Building)
- Town staff (Nov. 29, Town of Banff Operations)
- Banff Seniors Society (Nov. 29, Catharine Robb Whyte Building)
- Banff residents and businesses/people who drive for a living (Dec. 1, Royal Canadian Legion Col. Moore Branch)
- Boards and members of the Banff and Lake Louise Hospitality Association and of Banff & Lake Louise Tourism (Dec. 5, Mt. Royal Hotel)

Many participants in the focus group sessions praised the Town for conducting the meetings and providing an opportunity for deeper discussion among specific interested parties. Based on the feedback from the workshop that some questioned the inclusion of the concept plans, the facilitators emphasized that the concepts were best used as a starting point that people could use to identify features they liked or didn't like in considering a future of Banff Avenue. This approach produced constructive discussion about the evolution of the street.

Each focus group session spent more time discussing different benefits and challenges than in other groups. Some groups were more supportive of status quo (no pedestrian zone) than other groups, but almost none reached complete consensus of opinion within the whole group on the future direction; there were always differing positions.

The focus group sessions aligned with the topics cited in the online survey, but the meetings were beneficial for providing a wider variety of benefits people identified with Banff Avenue during the pedestrian zone. These were consistent with the online survey, but also included unique perspectives on benefits of the pedestrian zone such as the abundance of flowers, air quality, a no-cost place to visit/meet, more birds visible/noticed in the downtown, more opportunities to dine with pet dogs, more residents using Banff Avenue as a route rather than back alleys.

The points in opposition with the pedestrian zone were generally the same as challenges identified in the online survey and workshop – mainly traffic impacts for people on the detour streets and extra time required for people who drive – with some additions such as: the pedestrian zone serves as an attraction that generates crowds; more dispersed litter; issues with pedestrian safety in a zone with transit and fast-moving bikes; more restaurant patios drives up housing needs; and problematic access to key businesses/institutions within the pedestrian zone for people who must drive or be driven.

The focus groups all discussed traffic congestion in Banff, but at least one group discounted the impact of the Banff Avenue pedestrian zone on overall congestion in Banff.

Highlights from these sessions are detailed in Attachment 1.

Part 3: Future Capital Options

As detailed in motion FIN22-333, Council directed the development of concept options for the redesign of Banff Avenue ($70,000) and an associated community input process ($25,000). All funding for this initiative was from the Economic Recovery Reserve and not tax funded.

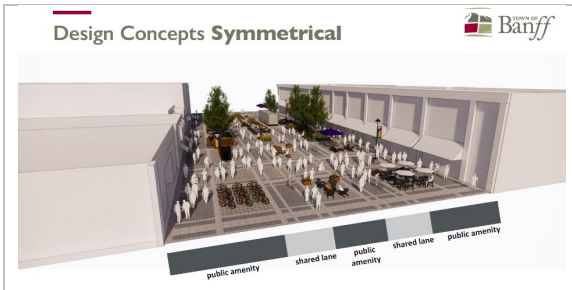
The Town of Banff has used concept drawings as a tool to instigate conversations around a capital project on multiple occasions (e.g. Banff Refreshing; Bear Street; etc….). Concept drawings can help envision a potential future scenario, assist people in responding to specific ideas, and parse out elements of a design they support / don't support. Administration selected landscape architecture firm Scatliff + Miller + Murray through a competitive RFP process in June, 2023 to develop concept drawings for an annual, seasonal pedestrian zone centred around the 100 and 200 blocks of Banff Avenue.

The design process began by exploring past precedents for Banff Avenue, as well as revisiting the improvements made as part of the Banff Refreshing project, completed in 2008.

This background study was supplemented with determining fundamental principles for a successful annual, seasonal pedestrian zone. The guiding principles which were developed were rooted in the historic alignment of Banff Avenue including its relationship with Cascade Mountain, the imperative to create a high-quality public realm befitting the Town's role as a visitor service centre, addressing fundamentals such as safety, and the need to have different configurations in summer vs. winter.

Based on these principles, two concept options were developed for use in the engagement process, supplemented by a digital 3D model and a physical model. An analysis of these options is included below.

Below is a summary of the two design options.

		
Design basis: • Return the middle of the road to pedestrians, where they want to be • Split movement pathways during a pedestrian zone into distinct north and south corridors		Design basis: • Focus pedestrian activity on the west side of the street, where its already busy and sunniest • Two combined vehicle lanes are provided that function as a shared street for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, and special events such as parades

Design elements: • shared amenity space including a central permanent amenity zone in the middle of Banff Ave and equal size amenity zones on the east and west side		Design elements: • Shared amenity space providing a larger permanent amenity zone on the west (sunny) side and a smaller amenity zone on the east side.
Traffic integration: • Fairly seamless, with vehicles already on the "correct" side of the street		Traffic integration: • Would require southbound vehicles to shift over at Wolf St / Banff Ave • Offers increased flexibility for special events such as parades

Some common elements that span both options include:

Physical infrastructure:

- All curbs and the raised central median are permanently removed
- Retain successful existing Banff Avenue character elements including ornamental streetlights, bus shelters, existing tree planting and the use of existing material types including natural stone, wood and black steel which reinforce the Rocky Mountain Character
- Amenity zones would be populated with a kit of parts including private commercial patios, permanent and temporary benches, bicycle racks, fire pits, moveable chairs and planters distributed to provide a balance between public and private use and allow efficient pedestrian flow.
- Existing Banff refreshing landscape planters along the edges are modified to shorten the length and provide more permeability and increased pedestrian access points to the amenity zones.
- Wood benches and larger boulders are incorporated into the planting modules to allow for informal public seating opportunities . All of the existing trees remain and are supplemented by additional deciduous trees
- A seamless paving pattern is proposed with a north south and east west grid that promotes crossing opportunities, defines flexible outdoor rooms for the kit of parts, and enhances the visual connection to Cascade Mountain

Winter conditions:

- 1 lane of traffic in each direction
- Retain some elements (e.g. permanent seating) to provide for a winter amenity
- Seasonal uses (e.g. flexible seating; bike racks) could be removed to make way for loading / parking and snow storage

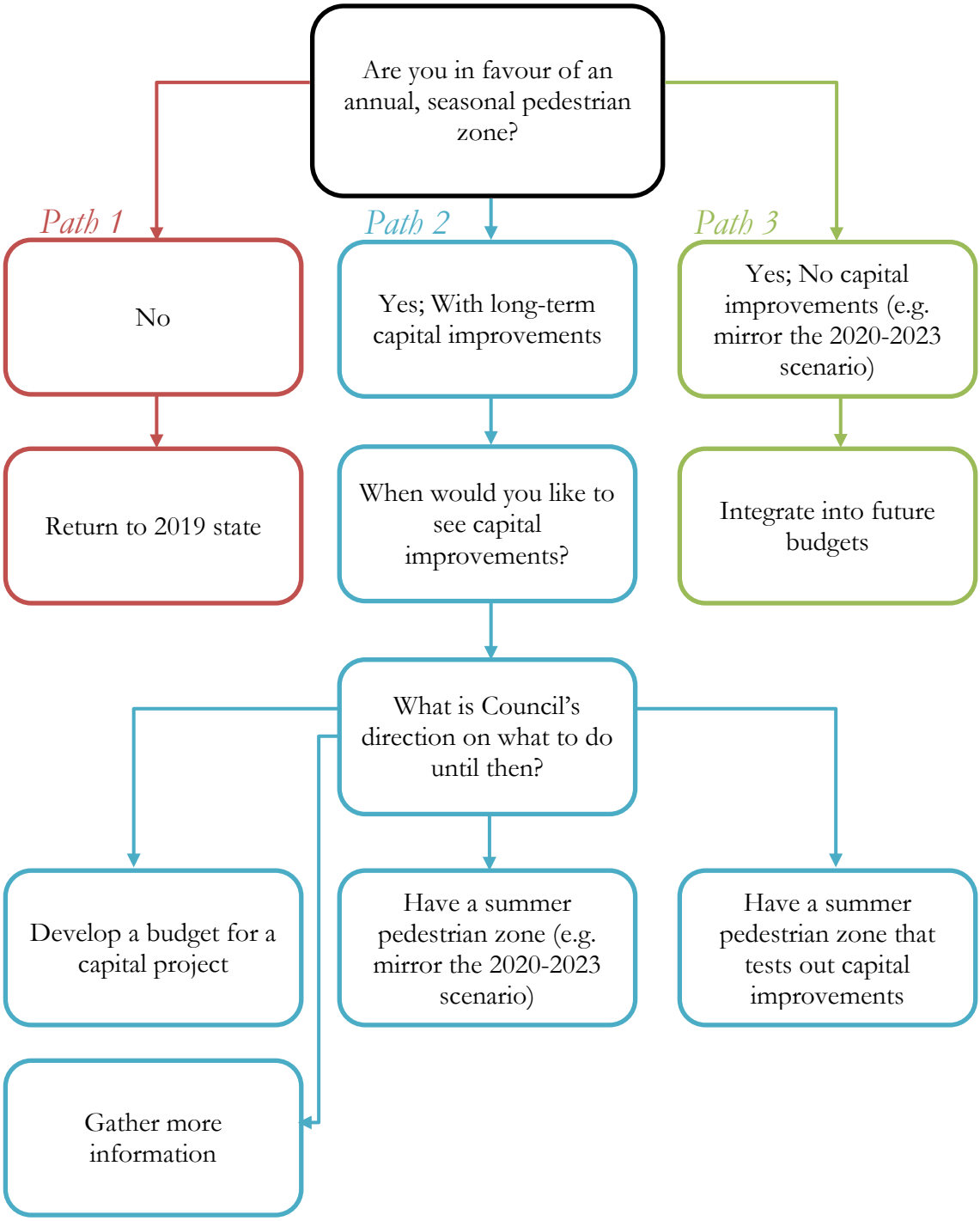
Public safety:

- Would require additional analysis to determine impacts associated with small and large scale public safety issues

One design principle that is better illustrated through images, is the desire of visitors to use the middle of Banff Avenue as a photo opportunity. This seemingly intuitive practice has existed for decades, and will continue regardless of any direction Council takes as a result of this report. From a design perspective, there would seem to be a logic in embracing this practice and providing the public with a safe opportunity to capture what is one of our country's most iconic memories.

Part 4: Next Steps

Administration is seeking long-term direction on the future of an annual, seasonal pedestrian zone. In order to facilitate a discussion around options, administration has prepared a flowchart to assist Council in determining next steps:



Path 1: No long-term downtown pedestrian zone

In this scenario, Banff Avenue would be returned to its pre-pandemic state. Caribou Street west of Banff Avenue, which is scheduled for a complete re-build in 2025, is being addressed through its own capital project process. With growth in visitation (note: Parks Canada projects 2023 to be a record year for visitation) administration would be looking for direction on the following areas:

- It is anticipated that increased pressure will be placed on downtown sidewalks without a pedestrian zone due to more sidewalk users. Given this, it is recommended that Council revisit all private use of public sidewalks prior to the summer 2024 season to determine whether or not sidewalk café seating, outdoor merchandising, and / or busking is physically viable on Banff Avenue, Caribou Street, and Wolf Street.
- Administration would request that direction be provided on whether or not to continue with the bike valet program which is currently associated with the pedestrian zone budget and if so from what funding source. In addition, an elevated level of service in the areas of downtown litter picking and landscape servicing was provided as part of the pedestrian zone. This elevated level of service is no longer budgeted.

Potential motion:

That Governance and Finance recommend to Council to direct administration to return with the Sidewalk Seating Policy (C7005-2), Outdoor Merchandise Display Policy (C5006), and Street and Public Place Use Bylaw 124-1 (Busking) to determine if existing policies require amending to facilitate anticipated increased sidewalk pedestrian volumes.

That Governance and Finance recommend to Council to amend the 2024-2027 Operating Budget to include:

- a bike valet service; and / or,
- additional downtown litter picking, landscape servicing, etc…;

to be funded through _____.

Note: As no future pedestrian zone is within the municipal budget, no motion is required should Council not wish to have a future pedestrian zone.

Path 2: A long-term downtown pedestrian zone with associated capital improvements

In this scenario, administration would seek to further develop a scope for a capital project that would be integrated into the long-term capital plan. Some key questions that would need to be addressed would be:

- *What are we building?* The concepts developed as part of this exercise can assist by triggering questions around scope, design elements, etc. and then revised accordingly. On the Bear Street project as a comparable, initial concept designs were revised through a more detailed design process, upon which capital budgets were developed.
- *What would associated operating costs be?* With any capital project, associated operating costs are included in order to evaluate the ongoing budget impacts.
- *What would associated revenue be?* With the existing pedestrian zone, approximately $155,000 in annual permit revenue is associated with sidewalk seating. Understanding revenue potential is part of the budgeting process.
- *What year would we target for construction?* Understanding the year of construction would assist with capital budget planning. Alternatively, a "no year identified" project could be used to indicate support, but with no budget assigned.

- *What would we do until a permanent pedestrian zone is constructed?* Administration would be seeking guidance on this "bridging" period, which could be multiple years. Some options administration have suggested for consideration include:
    - Operating a summer pedestrian zone as per 2020-2023;
    - Having a summer pedestrian zone that tests out elements of a permanent pedestrian zone. Examples of testing could include:
        - Making the central median flush with pavement to allow for more flexibility in movement for pedestrians, bicycles, transit, etc….
        - Realigning uses within the pedestrian zone to reflect different potential configurations (e.g. a central temporary seating area to reflect the "symmetrical" concept)
        - Revising planter configurations to create more pedestrian permeability opportunities
    - Gather more information; Administration could look at gathering additional information that Council might find helpful in their decision making process.

Potential motions:

That Governance and Finance recommend to Council to direct administration to return with a capital project as part of the 2025 Service Review process for consideration of streetscape improvements to the 100 and 200 block of Banff Avenue in order to facilitate an annual, seasonal pedestrian zone.

That Governance and Finance recommend to Council to direct administration to return with a report on interim capital measures to test out long-term capital improvements associated with an annual, seasonal pedestrian zone.

That Governance and Finance recommend to Council to direct administration to return with a report containing information on _____.

Path 3: A long-term downtown pedestrian zone with same setup as 2020-2023

In this scenario, administration would return immediately with a budget adjustment that reflected the 2020-2023 pedestrian zone configuration with some recommendations for localized infrastructure changes, reflecting comments received from the community. The project would be integrated as a service area under the Planning and Environment umbrella with associated budget items assigned to other organizational areas, and yearly service adjustments could be considered by Council at future service reviews.

Potential motions:

That Governance and Finance recommend to Council to direct administration to amend the 2024 – 2027 Operating Budget to include an annual, seasonal pedestrian zone with an associated expenditure of $172,000.

The anticipated budget noted above is based on the 2023 base budget, with a flagging allocation of $29,000 which represents the costs associated with flagging at the Beaver Street / Buffalo Street intersection and some additional service days. Other flagging costs have been addressed within the Engineering budget.

SUMMARY

The Town of Banff has operated a seasonal downtown pedestrian zone from 2020-2023. In December, 2022 Council gave direction to develop concepts for a permanent pedestrian zone and an associated community input process to help guide a decision around next steps. Between July, 2023 and December 2023 these steps were undertaken and administration has provided this report to assist Council in determining next steps.

Response Options:

1. Direct administration to take no action at this time;
2. Direct administration to adjust ongoing operating budgets to include a seasonal pedestrian zone reflecting the 2020-2023 configuration; or,
3. Direct administration to return with a capital project for capital improvements associated with a downtown pedestrian zone and associated action to take during the "bridging" period until the capital project is implemented.

OTHER INFORMATION

Budget

Depending on the pathway selected, administration would either:

- Integrate known costs into the operating budget (e.g. if direction is provided to mirror the 2020-2023 pedestrian zone moving forward); or,
- Return with a report on potential new budget items (e.g. modifications to the existing streetscape to test out future capital improvements.

It should be noted that revenues and costs associated with a pedestrian zone are not currently in any municipal budgets. Revenues associated with a pedestrian zone primarily relate to sidewalk seating fees (+/- $155,000), whereas costs (+/- $172,000) are spread across multiple service areas. Administration's recommendation is that funding for the associated shortfall (+/- $17,000) could be Visitor Pay Parking funded, tax funded, or additional user-fee funded although the last option lacks certainty as it is dependant on a fluctuating user base.

For reference, the 2023 budget and expenditures are included below, with 2023-specific items removed (e.g. those of a non-repetitive nature).

Service Area	Budget (2023)	Expense (2023)
Original Approved Budget		
Flagging at key intersections (Pedestrian Zone only)	$ 73,000.00	$ 51,000.00
Streets - Setup and Tear Down	$ 37,000.00	$ 23,014.00
Signage	$ 38,000.00	$ 22,708.00
Bike Valet	$ 4,000.00	$ 4,700.00
Municipal Parks - Plants, Plants Labour, Litter Picking, Curb Sweeping, Irrigation, Extended Time Frame	$ 64,000.00	$ 42,054.00
Original Approved Budget	**$ 216,000.00**	**$ 143,476.00**

Internal Resources
An annual, seasonal pedestrian zone would be delivered through a range of departments. The development of a long-term capital project would be led by Engineering and Planning and Environment with significant input from Operations.

Communication
The Town will notify participants in the community input process about decisions of Council. In 2024, communications to Banff residents will focus on short- and long-term plans for the 100 and 200 Blocks of Banff Avenue. Depending on direction from Council regarding keeping Banff Avenue open to vehicles next summer, or an extension of a temporary summer pedestrian zone, or plans for infrastructure changes on Banff Avenue, the Town will communicate to residents, involved organizations and visitors, using existing channels. The Town will continue communications about the best way for visitors and residents to experience the townsite, with a focus on shifting from personal vehicles to transit, walking and cycling to get around.

Banff Community Plan
Transportation goals:

- Provide a transportation system that encourages and complements pedestrian movement and cycling.
- Provide a transportation system that enhances the resident and visitor experience.
- Provide a transportation system that is economically and environmentally sustainable

Council Strategic Priorities
Lead Climate Action

- Demonstrate leadership by making decisions on Town policies, bylaws and operations based on the greatest feasible benefit to environmental protection and resilience.

Moving Into The Future

- Provide a sustainable transportation system that enhances the resident and visitor experience.
- Implement strategies to reduce reliance on personal vehicles to get to Banff and to move around town.
- Develop new and enhanced active mode infrastructure and initiatives.

Foster Connections

- Engage in informed and meaningful two-way communication with our residents on matters that affect them.

Legislation/Policy

Key strategy 2: True-to-place experiences

National park experiences are intended to capture the real places, activities and stories that define Canada; in short, they stem from and are genuinely rooted in authenticity and location.

An authentic experience in Banff is one that clearly arises out of the park's distinctive landscape and views,

Key strategy 5: Managing development

Objective 5.1

Land use and development respects Parks Canada's policy framework and is consistent with applicable legislation,

Objective 5.2

Barriers to park users and staff with disabilities are identified, prevented and removed,

Objective 5.3

New development or redevelopment is consistent with and supports the purpose, importance and character of the park, does not interfere with or dominate park features, has no significant adverse impacts on park resources, and where possible, contributes positively to the surrounding environment and addressing climate change impacts;

Key strategy 7: Climate change and Adaptation,

Objective 7.2

Climate change considerations are integrated into planning, operations and decision-making in Banff National Park.

Key strategy 8: Moving People Sustainably

Objective 8.1

Travel to and within the park will be enhanced, sustainable and integrated into the visitor experience.

Key strategy 9: Park Communities

Objective 9.1

The village of Lake Louise and the town of Banff remain as sustainable visitor centres and places for welcoming, orienting, and staging visitors' exploration of the park while providing comfortable living environments for eligible residents.

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment 1: "What We Heard" report – Public Consultation
Attachment 2: November 28th, 2023, Workshop Material

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