



# Agenda Report

## Fullerton City Council

**MEETING DATE:** JULY 16, 2024

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY

**SUBMITTED BY:** STEPHEN BISE, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

**PREPARED BY:** STEPHEN BISE, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR  
SUNAYANA THOMAS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
TAYLOR SAMUELSON, SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYST

**SUBJECT:** WALK ON WILSHIRE PARKLET PILOT PROGRAM OUTLOOK

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### SUMMARY

The Walk on Wilshire (WOW) parklet pilot program expired on June 30, 2024. Staff seeks direction whether to continue or terminate the program.

### PROPOSED MOTION

Provide direction to either continue or terminate the WOW outdoor dining program.

### ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Approve the Proposed Motion
- Extend the WOW Pilot and Conduct a Placemaking Assessment
- Terminate WOW Outdoor Dining Program
- Extend WOW without Assessment
- Other options brought by City Council.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the survey and overall feedback received, staff recommends extending the Walk on Wilshire and Conduct a Placemaking Assessment. The City has some concerns regarding the Walk on Wilshire in particular with closure of road and visibility concerns for some businesses. However, overall the community input has been positive on this program.

### CITY MANAGER REMARKS

The City Manager concurs with the staff recommendation and seeks City Council direction on moving forward with the Walk on Wilshire.

### PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statement:

- Infrastructure and City Assets

### FISCAL IMPACT

The total cost to make improvements to support the WOW temporary closure, parklet pilot, and maintain the bike boulevard was \$90,569. The total revenue generated from 2022 to date is \$32,670. Once all parklets are constructed, the annual lease revenue is estimated to be approximately \$40,000.

To enhance the space further, additional costs would be required to improve the space to facilitate a pedestrian promenade long-term conversion. The following outlines estimated costs:

Item	Unit Cost	Labor Cost per Unit	Quantity	Total Cost Including Labor
Bike Racks	\$500	\$200	10	\$7,000
Benches	\$1,200	\$400	5	\$8,000
Public Art	\$10,000	\$2,000	3	\$36,000
Lighting	\$2,000	\$1,000	10	\$30,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$81,000</b>

Maintenance of the enhancements would be covered by the estimated \$40,000 annual lease revenue provided by the tenants who are utilizing public-right-of-way encroachments for their parklets.

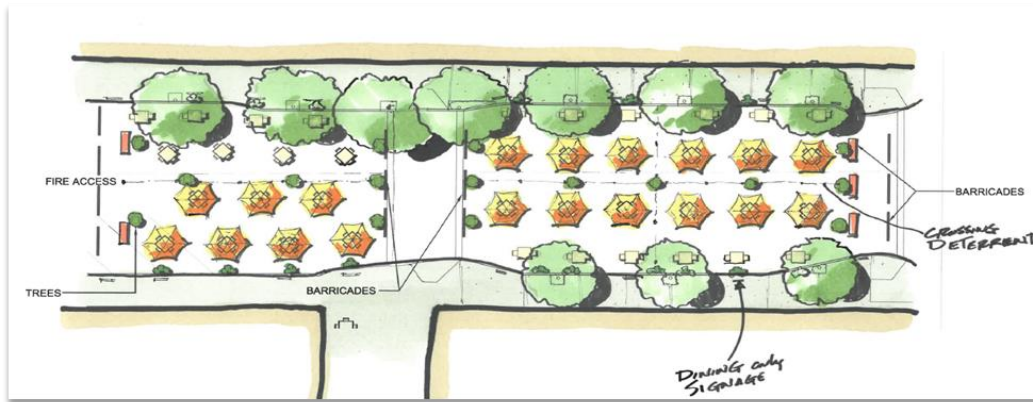
### BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

#### *Background*

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fullerton Municipal Code permitted outdoor dining as an extension to a business' operations / floor area through the issuance of an Encroachment Agreement (with specific mitigating measures) and encroachment permit with associated fees for the use of public property.

When the State restricted indoor dining during the COVID-19 pandemic, many municipalities, including the City of Fullerton, temporarily relaxed outdoor dining regulations and standards to support businesses heavily impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions. Outdoor dining allowed restaurant and retail businesses to continue to operate on either public or private property, evidenced as a safer public environment than indoor spaces.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City temporarily closed Wilshire Avenue from approximately 200-feet west of Harbor Boulevard to the signalized intersection to provide an alternative dining experience in Fullerton for customers, workers and operators. This segment of Wilshire Avenue has a traditionally low volume of vehicular traffic and a contiguous stretch of restaurant storefronts.



City Council approved ending the temporary outdoor dining program citywide on March 15, 2022 with a September 30, 2022 effective date and gave businesses the option to continue by complying with the Standard Outdoor Dining permitting process.

City Council approved an 18-month parklet pilot program for WOW businesses on August 16, 2022, effective January 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 which included a bike element. City Council approved the WOW Parklet Guideline and continued temporary closure of Wilshire Avenue (approximately 200-feet west of Harbor Boulevard) in conjunction.

Several businesses became hesitant to invest the resources to permit, design and construct the required parklet. The following summarizes business participation:

Business	Participating	Parklet Permitted	Parklet Constructed	Encroachment Agreement (EA) Executed
Mulberry Street Ristorante	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fullerton Brew Company	✓	✓		
Rialto Café	Occupy small portion of the sidewalk only			✓
Sip and Savor	Declined to participate			
SomiSomi	✓	✓		
Green Bliss	Declined to participate			
Retail and Restaurant within Villa Del Sol	Declined to participate			

*NOTE: Fullerton Brew Company and SomiSomi are hesitant to pull their permits to build the parklet due to uncertainty of the continued pilot/closure.*

*Expenses and Revenue*

The following summarizes of improvements and/or expenses to support WOW's temporary closure, parklet pilot program and maintain the corridor bike boulevard.

Improvements	Cost
Initial closure and planters	\$18,000
Modified traffic signal at Harbor Boulevard/Wilshire Avenue and on-street signing and striping to facilitate pedestrian/bike movement and restrict vehicular traffic	\$31,930
Procure and install bollards at west/east terminus	\$40,639
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$90,569</b>

City Council directed staff to start collecting lease revenue from the businesses utilizing public spaces for outdoor dining in March 2022,. The following is a summary of the total revenue collected to date.

Business	Total lease payment received
Mulberry Street Ristorante**	\$7,650
Fullerton Brew Company**	\$19,125
Rialto Café*	\$2,295
Smoking Tiger*	\$180
Somi Somi**	\$3,060
Green Bliss*	\$360
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$32,670</b>

*\*Business discontinued participation on WOW or executed a no-fee encroachment agreement per the Standard Outdoor Dining Guidelines.*

*\*\* Billing ended in August 2023 pending parklet construction and execution of encroachment agreements.*

Staff estimates the annual lease revenue totals approximately \$40,000 if WOW continues and all parklets are constructed.

*Environmental*

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) defines a “project” as an activity that 1) is a discretionary action by a governmental agency and 2) will either have a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect impact on the environment.

The Fullerton General Plan roadway classifications include Major Arterial, Primary Arterial, Secondary Arterial and Local Collector. Wilshire Avenue does not fall into any of the roadway classifications listed in the General Plan.

WOW is a discretionary action with no environmental impact. In addition, the closure of Wilshire Avenue does not require amending the circulation element in the General Plan due to its roadway classification. Staff therefore concluded the long-term closure of Wilshire Avenue is not subject to CEQA. However, since the General Plan identifies Wilshire Avenue as an Existing Class III Bike Route, it should remain as such.

### *Public Disposition*

Based on the community survey for the Walk on Wilshire (WOW) initiative, staff gathered comprehensive feedback from over 500 respondents. The results indicate strong support for continuing the street closure, with 70% of respondents favoring its extension. Community members particularly appreciate the enhanced walkability, outdoor dining, and social opportunities that the closure has brought to downtown Fullerton, citing these changes as significant factors in creating a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment. While the majority of feedback was positive, respondents did offer suggestions for improvement to further enhance the downtown experience. Key suggestions included better lighting, increased safety measures, and more promotional events to attract visitors. Traffic management and parking availability were noted as areas of concern, but these issues were significantly outweighed by the positive impacts reported. The community values the improved ambiance and increased opportunities for social interaction provided by the WOW initiative, reflecting a hopeful outlook for continued enhancements and sustained vibrancy in downtown Fullerton. Despite some concerns, the overall sentiment towards the WOW initiative remains overwhelmingly positive, highlighting its success in transforming the area into a more welcoming and lively space. 15% of respondents were neutral, 10% opposed, and 5% strongly opposed the street closure. Key concerns included increased traffic congestion, lack of parking, reduced accessibility, and occasional underuse of the space. Some business owners reported lower sales and foot traffic, and some residents noted increased noise and disruption.

Downtown businesses have provided mixed responses. A significant portion of businesses have not fully capitalized on the available space, complicating efforts to visualize its full potential. For instance, while Fullerton Brew and SomiSomi have secured their permits, they have yet to commence construction. Rialto expressed financial concerns about maintaining a temporary parklet, and Sip and Savor declined participation. Furthermore, a few businesses from Malden to the closure have raised issues regarding the partial street closure highlighting their inability to experience the benefits of a closed frontage, affecting storefront visibility, lighting, and safety after 10 PM.

The following matrix provides survey responses:

Walk on Wilshire Impact Survey – Results (550+ Responses)			
Demographics	Type of Respondent	Residents: 55% Visitors: 30% Business Owners: 15%	Majority of respondents are residents, followed by visitors and a smaller percentage of business owners.
Proximity to Walk on Wilshire	Proximity to Walk on Wilshire	Within 1 mile: 40% 1-3 miles: 35% 3-5 miles: 15% 5+ miles: 10%	Most respondents are within a 3-mile radius of Walk on Wilshire.
Impact of Street Closure	Perception of Impact	Very Positive: 30% Somewhat Positive: 30% Neutral: 25% Somewhat Negative: 15% Very Negative: 10%	Overall positive perception, with some neutral and negative feedback.
Support for Continuation	Support for Continuation of Walk on Wilshire	Strongly Support: 45% Support: 25% Neutral: 15% Oppose: 10% Strongly Oppose: 5%	Majority (70%) of respondents support or strongly support the continuation.
Key Themes in Comments	Additional Comments	Top terms: street, closure, downtown, traffic, business	Frequent mentions of street, closure, and downtown, indicating areas of concern and interest.
Suggestions for Improvement	Suggested Improvements	Better Lighting: 30% More Events: 25%, Improved Traffic Management: 20%, Enhanced Safety: 15%, Public Art: 10%	Key suggestions include better lighting, more events, and improved traffic management.
Favorite Aspect	What do you enjoy most about Walk on Wilshire?	Outdoor Dining: 35% Walkability: 30% Community Feel: 20% Events: 15%	Outdoor dining and walkability are the most enjoyed aspects.
Least Favorite Aspect	What is your least favorite aspect of Walk on Wilshire?	Traffic Issues: 40% Parking Problems: 25% Noise: 20% Lack of Activities: 15%	Traffic and parking issues are the most disliked aspects.
Business Impact	How did the street closure affect your business compared to pre-closure periods?	Increased Sales: 30% Decreased Sales: 20% No Change: 50%	Mixed impact on businesses, with many seeing no change.
Customer Feedback	Summary of Customer Feedback about street closures	Positive: 50% Neutral: 30% Negative: 20%	Customer feedback is generally positive, with a notable portion being neutral.

Overall Experience	Rate the overall customer experience in the Walk on Wilshire area	Excellent: 30% Good: 40% Fair: 20% Poor: 10%	Overall good customer experience, with some areas for improvement.
Community Impact	How do you think the street closure impacted the local community?	Strongly Positive: 35%, Positive: 25% Neutral: 20% Negative: 10% Strongly Negative: 10%	Positive community impact, with a smaller portion feeling neutral or negative about the changes.

*Placemaking and Economic Development Initiatives*

Recent initiatives have highlighted the strong public demand for enhanced dining experiences and communal spaces in Downtown Fullerton, which is recognized as a vibrant urban center. Insights from the recent retail study by Kosmont indicate that public open spaces and activated areas are now considered "anchor tenants" essential for attracting visitors and fostering vibrant community interactions.

Staff suggest conducting a targeted placemaking study within Downtown Fullerton. This study will assess potential locations that could be developed into dynamic communal spaces. Staff will evaluate the suitability of these areas for activities such as outdoor dining and public gatherings and identify specific sites that warrant investment for either full or partial closures. Focus of the study would be on both opportunities for parklet and partial street closures as well as longevity of downtown promenades. A Promenade involves partially or completely closing a street to vehicular traffic to facilitate active transportation uses such as walking, biking, recreation, outdoor dining, and enjoyable public interaction. These areas enhance pedestrian safety, encourage non-motorized transportation, and promote safe pedestrian interaction and outdoor activities. Promenades are envisioned to create sociable spaces with a variety of uses and activities, well-connected to their surroundings, and comfortable and welcoming to people of all abilities. They help create quality places that give an identity and image to communities, attracting new residents, businesses, and investments. The creation of Promenades is intended to be community-driven, making them functional and inviting for everyone.

The goal of this study is to ensure that these public spaces not only enhance urban life but also are economically viable and environmentally sustainable. By providing detailed cost estimates, staff aims to outline the financial implications of various enhancements, from installing public art and street furniture to other necessary upgrades.

Additionally, staff advocate for seasonal activation of these spaces for community events and support funding for aesthetic and functional improvements. Detailed proposals for these enhancements will be developed and presented to City Council for further consideration.

This focused placemaking strategy is intended to transform Downtown Fullerton into a more cohesive, vibrant, and economically robust urban center, ensuring that it remains a key destination within the city.

*Next Steps*



The initial temporary closure of the Walk on Wilshire (WOW) was designed to support businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to heightened public interest in maintaining and expanding alternative dining experiences. Despite widespread support for the closure, only a few businesses participated in the parklet pilot program. There is a clear desire for more communal spaces such as promenades and paseos in Fullerton.

To address this, staff recommend conducting a comprehensive placemaking study to evaluate potential areas for similar initiatives throughout downtown Fullerton, including the current WOW site. This would include funding for public art and street furniture, with detailed proposals and quotes to be provided. This assessment will provide cost estimates and help develop a holistic approach that enhances equity and accessibility, ensuring that public spaces meet the diverse needs of the community.

Additionally, staff must assess compliance with California Vehicle Code Section 21101, which allows local authorities to close highways to vehicular traffic if they are no longer needed for that purpose. Staff will also need to determine if the original roadway dedication restricts use to only street or roadway purposes, which could impact the feasibility of permanent closures.

Based on strong community support, staff proposes two options:

1. Extend the WOW pilot and conduct a placemaking assessment:
  - Continue the WOW program for an additional period.
  - Hire a consultant to evaluate various downtown locations, providing cost estimates for necessary upgrades and services.
2. Close WOW and conduct a placemaking assessment:
  - Return Wilshire Avenue to its original state. Businesses to comply with the existing outdoor dining guidelines.
  - Conduct a placemaking assessment to identify potential areas for outdoor dining and community spaces.

cc: City Manager Eric J. Levitt