



# City of Bothell™

**TO:** Mayor Olsen and Members of the Bothell City Council

**FROM:** Becky Range, Interim Assistant City Manager (Presenter)  
Michael Kattermann, Community Development Director  
Nik Stroup, Parks and Recreation Director

**DATE:** September 21, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Town Square, Festival Street, and other Downtown Improvements

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<b>POLICY CONSIDERATION:</b>	<p>This item provides information to City Council on Downtown programming and potential Town Square, Festival Street, and Main Street improvements that could connect more of our public spaces and provide safe gathering places and event footprints for a recurring variety of community events or activities.</p> <p>Any decisions made will impact community members, Downtown businesses, and visitors. Staff recommendations here are based on the following guiding principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connecting more of our public spaces and safely expanding pedestrian areas where community members can gather, socialize and engage with each other</li><li>• Providing a more broad and flexible mix of placemaking for community events, pedestrian areas, and public rights of way that do not adversely impact or benefit one particular area over another</li></ul>
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<b>HISTORY:</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
	<b>JUNE 2, 2020</b>	City Council provided direction to close Main Street between 101st Ave NE and 102nd Ave NE and allow use of the right of way at no cost to support downtown businesses
	<b>OCTOBER 6, 2020</b>	City Council provided direction to extend the Main Street closure and fee waivers until restaurants are able to resume full service
	<b>APRIL 20, 2021</b>	City Council extended temporary closure of Main Street through the summer until October 3, 2021 and requested staff return with more information on Town Square and Festival Street Improvements
	<b>SEPTEMBER 14, 2021</b>	City Council extended temporary closure of Main Street through March 31, 2022.

In response to capacity limits and increased safety requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Bothell temporarily closed Main Street between 101st Ave NE and 102nd Ave NE and allowed use of the right of way at no cost to support downtown businesses. As the Delta variant spreads in our region and businesses are still faced with uncertainties, City Council extended the temporary closure of Main Street until March 31, 2022.

During this temporary closure, our community has enjoyed the opportunity to gather, socialize, and engage with each other in this pedestrian-friendly area. Some Councilmembers have expressed their desire to permanently close Main Street. Staff have expressed some concerns with how this impacts emergency access, traffic circulation, and potential recoupment of federal grant funds used to fund recent street improvements.

To better understand and evaluate more public spaces across Downtown, Council would like to discuss how we could more easily and safely close and activate Main Street, as well as other areas in our Downtown, including Town Square and Festival Street.

**DISCUSSION:** **Placemaking with Safe, Flexible and Connected Spaces**

There has been a lot of interest in placemaking and community building opportunities in Downtown. The purpose of this item is to provide information for the Council’s use in further discussions about Main Street, during mid-biennial budget deliberations, and for the 2022 Capital Facilities Plan update.

Staff believe there is a strategic way to approach how our residents, visitors, and tourists engage and interact in our Downtown. The Downtown Subarea Plan calls for a network of public spaces, including key street corridors, creating “a sequence of unfolding spaces that inspire people to walk and to linger in the center of the city” and “foster the development of an increasingly engaging and diverse network of connected public places in the district (to help draw, complement and support shopping, eating and entertainment destinations).”

This strategy is dependent on two main things 1) restored recreation funding and prioritizing of community programming and 2) an accessible public Town Square, connected to multiple event locations, with thoughtfully planned road closures for programming and events.

**Restored Recreation Funding:** Staff know that many in our community crave robust, engaging, multi-cultural programming and events. Two businesses on Main Street previously requested the temporary closure between 101st Ave NE and 102nd Ave NE remain permanently. The proposal submitted described a town square vision for the closed area, “the intended purpose would be to serve as a gathering area for “music, arts, farmers markets, children’s activities...and events that could be scheduled there, such as Safe Halloween, Wine Walks, Beer Festivals etc.”

Most recently, some Councilmembers have requested a recurring Friday night community event series to create a welcoming place for Bothell residents to gather, interact and have fun on a regular basis. Multi-cultural theme nights celebrating Bothell’s diverse community could help Downtown come alive with ethnic food, handmade arts and crafts, public art, and music or concerts. It is challenging to provide support for such events with our current staffing.

Restored recreation funding would allow more relationship building and collaboration needed to partner with local non-profit organizations, community groups, the Bothell Kenmore Chamber of Commerce as well as City Boards and Commissions, all things that are needed to deliver a recurring community event series.

This restoration is scheduled for discussion during the City Council Budget Request Study Session.

**Public Town Square, Multiple Locations, and Opportunities:**

Staff believes there is value in programming and activating our public Town Square area near City Hall and creating flexible gathering spaces throughout Downtown that:

- Accommodate a wide array of programming
- Connect pedestrians to the many public amenities of our entire Downtown, and
- Provide a more balanced approach to supporting area businesses

Our Downtown was planned with these opportunities in mind.

Town Square and Festival Street: Prior to, during and subsequent to development of the Downtown Subarea Plan, discussions of creating a pedestrian oriented Town Square have focused on using 101st Avenue NE as a “Festival Street” that could be closed for special occasions without creating the traffic disruptions of a Main Street closure, and connecting to the City Hall plazas, which were designed to provide space for community events, as well as the Police Department parking lot and the parking lot along the south side of 183<sup>rd</sup> Street between 101<sup>st</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup>, which have been used to support community events in the past.

**Current Amenities:**

- Plazas: The large plaza on the southeast corner of the City Hall block, with its fountain, public art seating and game tables, was intended to serve as a Town Square. With adequate support, much more could be done to activate this space, along with Festival Street and other spaces along it, to fulfill its function as Bothell’s Town Square.
- The plaza to the west of the Town Hall portion of City Hall was also designed and intended to support both passive uses and community events like outdoor movies with its festival lighting, seating and picnic tables.
- Sidewalks: City Hall was built with a wide sidewalk along and leading to Festival Street. Electricity outlets along both sides of 101<sup>st</sup> Ave

**Other Improvements that could be made:**

- Installation of hydraulic or moveable bollards and other infrastructure to enable easy and periodic closure of 101<sup>st</sup> Ave NE (Festival Street) between NE 183<sup>rd</sup> and NE 185<sup>th</sup> and Main Street between 101<sup>st</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup>. A request to fund this under the American Rescue Plan has been

submitted, to support economic recovery of businesses by attracting events and customers to Downtown.

- Options for funding improvements to sidewalks along the rest of 101<sup>st</sup> leading to Main Street are being explored. One advantage of closing 101<sup>st</sup> street for special events is providing more space for pedestrians within a tight right-of-way.
- Improved street and sidewalk lighting along Festival Street and around City Hall could also make the area more inviting for night time events.
- Installing sun shades or weather protection over west City Hall plaza would improve usability of the space during all seasons of the year.

#### Boulevard Access Lanes

During the City's Downtown Revitalization Plan development, the multiway boulevard segment of Bothell Way NE was designed to handle arterial traffic, maintain the downtown's visibility, host pedestrian-oriented activity, and make it into a distinctive place in Downtown Bothell.

#### Current Amenities:

- Flexible and easy closure to traffic - Access lanes are already separate from the arterial and can be easily closed for events.
- Power bollards have already been installed along some of the access lanes to help provide a power source for vendors and events.
- Thoughtfully planned pedestrian-scale lighting that is inviting for people to walk and creates a better atmosphere for events and gathering spaces.

The design of the multiway boulevard was intended to create a "place" for our downtown and already serves as a perfect setting for pedestrian-oriented events and activity on a wide street.

#### Main Street

Staff believes a key location for programming is Main Street, but has concerns with turning this street into a permanent public Town Square. We do believe Main Street is a key location for programming and events (4<sup>th</sup> of July parade, Tree Lighting Festival), and could be closed periodically when there is less traffic – such as weekends, nights, and during the summer when schools and University of Washington Bothell (UWB) and Cascadia College are in summer mode.

Similar to Festival Street, the block could be more easily closed by installing hydraulic or moveable, crash-rated bollards at each end of the block similar to those installed along the flexible zones.

Staff estimates it would cost approximately \$175,000 to \$325,000 to install crash-rated bollards to close off the block in 2023 including design and construction. The low end of the price range would be to install a similar system currently employed along the flexible parking stalls. The high end of the price range would be to install hydraulic bollards. For intermittent closures, staff would recommend retractable bollards which would represent a mid-range cost of about \$225,000.

A request to fund these bollards under the American Rescue Plan has also been submitted, to support economic recovery of businesses by attracting events and customers to Downtown.

#### Park at Bothell Landing (PABL)

During the City's visioning process for the Downtown Revitalization Plan, PABL was identified as one of the key properties that brought the vision together. Located at the intersection of State Route 522 and Bothell Way, the park provides a natural setting that connects downtown to the river. The City already hosts many wonderful events and activities here. If funding can be identified for more improvements, community gatherings and special events like farmers markets, art in the park, expanded concert series and cultural celebrations would be a natural fit for this location.

#### Current Amenities:

- Picnic tables, benches and barbecues
- Playground and restrooms
- Amphitheater
- Rentable facility for classes, meetings and celebrations
- Historical museum and Veterans Memorial
- Access to Sammamish River for recreational activities
- Kayak, paddle board and bike rentals
- Bridge over Sammamish river connecting Bothell to regional trail system
- Manicured green space, trees, trails and a raised boardwalk
- Parking for vehicles and bikes

#### Other Improvements that could be made:

In 2010 the Park at Bothell Landing Master Plan was created which identified ten distinct zones within the park for future development. To date, only a couple of the zones have been designed and constructed. One of the most important elements of the plan that has yet to be designed and constructed is the gathering plaza and lawn zone. For this zone, the plan identified an opportunity to construct:

- Urban plaza with benches, seat walls, shade structures, a covered activity area,
- Public restrooms, an informal grass play area
- Water feature (splash pad?)

In 2020, the City developed and adopted the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan. During the development of PROS, many residents indicated a desire and need for more spaces for people to gather and celebrate, inclusive play areas, a splash pad, improved water access to the river, covered seating areas, shade structures, improved pathways and lighting as well as more ADA accessible park amenities.

The topic of additional phasing of the Park at Bothell Landing Master Plan, including the design and construction of the gathering place and lawn zone as well as an inclusive play area and picnic zone, has been identified as topics for further discussion during the City Council Budget Request Study Session. Depending on the nature of that discussion, further exploration of the topic may be deferred until the start of the Capital Facilities Update (CFP) in early 2022.

**FISCAL IMPACTS:** This item is for presentation only. Several of the topics contained in this agenda bill are scheduled for discussion at the City Council Budget Request Study Session. If subsequently advanced for inclusion in the mid-biennial budget amendment, then the fiscal impacts of those items will be presented with the proposed mid-biennial budget package.

**ATTACHMENTS:** None.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Receive this information, provide thoughts, and use information provided to shape and inform future budget discussions.