



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Raul Peralez
Vice Mayor Magdalena Carrasco
Councilmember Sergio Jimenez
Councilmember Chappie Jones
Councilmember Johnny Khamis

SUBJECT: San José Complete Streets
Design Guidelines

DATE: April 27, 2018

Approved by:

Date:

4/27/2018

RECOMMENDATION

Accept staff recommendations and direct staff to:

1. Add a supplemental section outlining design guidelines on *pedestrian-only zones* and to that effect conduct a short-term pilot on San Pedro Street between W. Santa Clara Street to W. St. John Street.
2. Allow the installation of enhanced sidewalk surfaces and decorative pavement in public right-of-way (ROW) as part of private development proposals with the condition that the adjacent property owner would be responsible for the maintenance of those improvements.

DISCUSSION

We are elated with the recommendations brought forth by our Department of Transportation (DOT) staff to transform our streets towards focusing more on people rather than the cars we drive. This shift towards designing our streets to promote more walking and biking is a great step forward in achieving the goals set forth in our general plan. We especially appreciate how the first guiding street design principle is to be people-oriented and that it should “*support safe, convenient travel and encourage a healthy community, as well as economic and social equity.*”

Last September, Councilmember Peralez proposed a one-year pilot to open two streets in his district to exclusively pedestrians during our priority setting process. While this proposal did not get prioritized, we still believe it is an idea worth exploring. The urban

fabric of our City is how our public rights-of-way function and how it brings people together in a safe, efficient, and community-oriented manner. We understand that the notion of prohibiting vehicular traffic to allow more pedestrian accessibility may seem unconventional but it is far from unusual for many large cities around the world.

Here are some examples:

- In Washington, D.C., certain streets in Rock Creek Park prohibit vehicular traffic every weekend allowing people to run, walk, and bike and promote healthy lifestyles.
- In New York City, several streets were closed in Times Square temporarily starting in 2009 to create a pedestrian-only plaza nicknamed the “Bowtie.” The permanent version, designed by Snøhetta, was finished after seven years of construction.
- In Madrid, some streets off the main city square, like *Calle del Arenal*, are mostly car-free.
- In once car-congested Copenhagen, where our City staff visited in 2015 during a Knight study tour, *Strøget* has been a pedestrian, car-free avenue since 1962 and now boasts a vibrant urban corridor.



Rock Creek Parkway - Washington, D.C.



Times Square/Bowtie - New York, NY



Calle del Arenal - Madrid, Spain



Strøget - Copenhagen, Denmark

As seen in the images on Page 2, the way that the streets are designed has contributed to an environment conducive to high-volume pedestrian activity. In 2014, SPUR published their “Future of Downtown San José” report where they articulated the importance of design guidelines to enhance and increase our inventory of public spaces for pedestrians.

“Focus on the pedestrian realm in all design guidelines. This includes widening sidewalks and adding street furniture (such as benches), street trees, water fountains, pedestrian-scaled lighting, public art and other amenities.

Additionally, San José could expand its network of paseos in order to improve pedestrian accessibility throughout downtown. The Paseo de San Antonio is successful and should be extended to Diridon Station. Additionally, some paseos could be incorporated into future development. For example, the city has opportunities to establish a mid-block paseo from San Fernando Street north to Fountain Alley and to put paseos in the Mitchell Block development between Santa Clara and St. John and between Market and 1st Street. It will be essential for the city to establish street design guidelines that require incorporating paseos in the new major development projects.”

Similar to how our DOT staff prototyped many of their proposed ideas in concert with NACTO last summer, it would be prudent to prototype this concept on a more frequent basis. We say frequent because for example on San Pedro Street, there exists already a pedestrian-only zone every Friday for the San José Downtown Association’s Farmer’s Market, as well as sporadically for special events such as the Super Bowl. Increasing the frequency of this pedestrian-only zone will provide staff and council useful insight on how to continue evolving our streets to become fully people-oriented.

During discussions with DOT staff, we understand that a major step in exploring this idea is the process to design our streets where it encourages the person to confidently step into a space that has for decades been dominated by the car. The development of these supplemental guidelines would be useful in future discussions on land use or transportation projects that consider opening streets exclusively to pedestrians.

Thank you DOT for all of your work and we look forward to working together in making our streets truly a place for people.