

SIDEWALK CLOSURES UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pedestrian access to sidewalks in the downtown needs to be maintained during construction projects. Alternatives to sidewalk closures such as overhead hoarding or use of protected vehicle lanes minimize disruption to pedestrians. Sidewalks have been kept available to pedestrians increasingly each year since 2011 and contributes not only to mobility but to healthy local businesses and community vibrancy.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION

That the SPC on Transportation and Transit recommends that Council receive this update report for information.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT, DATED 2014 OCTOBER 10:

That the Administration Recommendation contained in Report TT2014-0782 be approved.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2013 June 10, Council adopted Report TT2013-0361, as amended, as follows:

“That Council direct Administration to continue working collaboratively with the construction industry and Business Revitalization Zones Representatives to address current policies, bylaws and directives related to pedestrian accommodation in work zones, including but not limited to business continuity and decorative hoarding and report back on progress in 2014 June.”

On 2014 June 18, “SPC on Transportation and Transit recommends that Council approve Administration’s request to defer the update report on sidewalk closures during construction to 2014 October.”

BACKGROUND

Sidewalks are an important part of Calgary’s transportation network. Construction applications are reviewed for opportunities for pedestrian protection (Attachment) and for aesthetics.

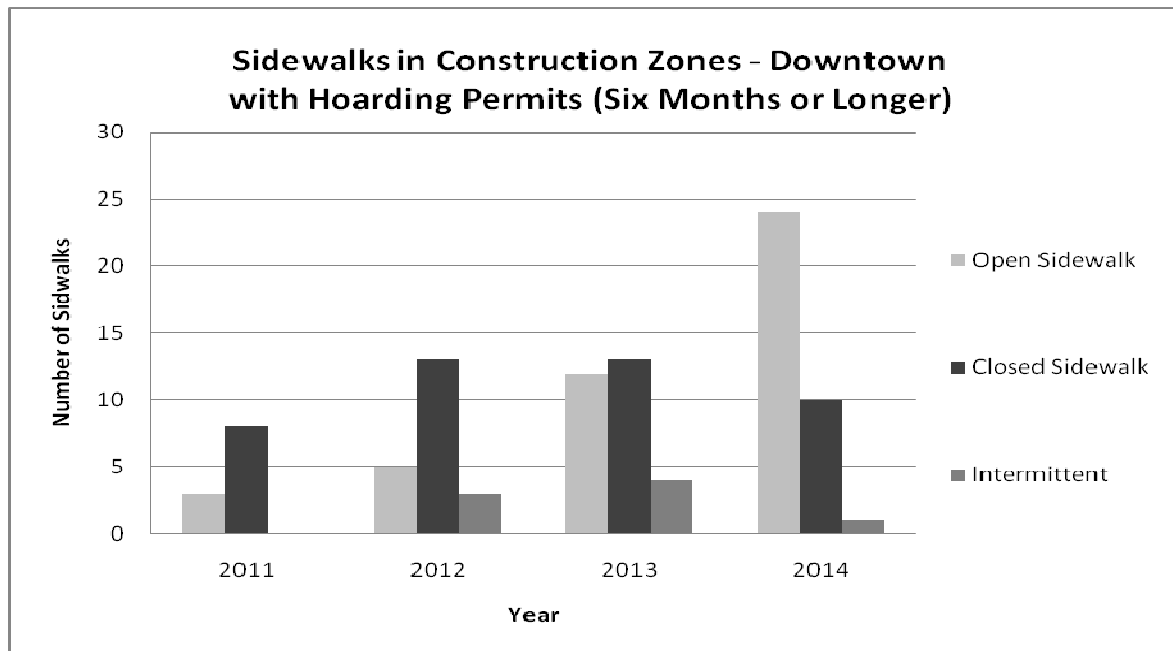
Sidewalk closures have reduced in number and impact following deliberate collaboration between Roads; Planning, Development and Assessment (PDA); the Calgary Construction Association (CCA); Business Revitalization Zones (BRZ); the Calgary Downtown Association (CDA); Calgary Economic Development (CED) and the Development industry.

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

Construction Activity Tracking Map

Two sets of downtown construction maps have been developed. The first notifies pedestrians of sidewalk closures and the second tracks statistics related to sidewalk closures and creates comparable annual data. A summary of construction sites with hoarding permits shows how pedestrian access has improved since 2011.

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Decorative Hoarding

The construction industry is encouraged to use Boardworx art on hoarding through reduced permit fees. Boardworx is a program that gathers mural artwork from members of the Calgary Boys and Girls Club to beautify construction site hoarding. Program expansion in 2015 will introduce additional decorative options for industry and encourage higher participation rates.

Business Access and Continuity

Sidewalk access helps minimize the impacts of construction on local businesses. Two additional strategies have been developed for business access: 1. Business signage is shown on hoarding as a permit requirement. 2. Businesses are notified of short term (daily/hourly) closures. The “Practical Guide for Construction Sites in the city of Calgary”, managed by PDA, has been updated to include a best practice around providing communications to businesses when short term closures may impact them. This protects both customer and delivery access.

Calgary Downtown Association Vitality Awards

The Calgary Downtown Association (CDA) has an annual awards program called Vitality Awards. The program recognizes individuals, teams and corporations for going the extra mile to make the downtown a better place for the citizens of Calgary. In 2012 and 2013 the CDA recognized the positive contributions of the development and construction industry to maintain the pedestrian realm and to commit to vibrancy, safety and beautification of the downtown while construction was in progress.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

Stakeholders that were engaged during the writing of this report include: Planning, Development and Assessment; Transportation Planning; Arts and Culture; the Calgary Construction

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Association; Business Revitalization Zones; the Calgary Downtown Association; Developers; and Calgary Economic Development.

Strategic Alignment

The findings of this report align with Calgary Transportation Plan and the Municipal Development Plan including the provision of safe and efficient transportation services, provision of reasonable accessibility for all citizens, enabling walking as the preferred mobility choice and creating a prosperous economy by maintaining access to local business.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Facilitating walking and other active modes of transportation through a continuous pedestrian environment improves health, minimizes dependency on vehicles and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Minimizing construction impacts has a positive economic impact on business owners.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

There are no operating budget implications associated with this report. Investigation and implementation of a strategy surrounding decorative hoarding could reduce current and future operating budgets.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

There are no capital budget implications associated with this report.

Risk Assessment

Continued emphasis of pedestrian convenience and safety near construction sites supports Calgary's downtown.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

To update Council on the improvements to the management of sidewalk closures related to construction and to request direction to investigate a means of refining and managing the use of decorative hoarding on construction sites.

ATTACHMENT

Sidewalk Closures Update – Technical Report