



## **CITY OF KIRKLAND**

**Department of Public Works**

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### **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Victoria Kovacs, AICP, Transportation Planner  
Martha Chaudhry, Special Projects Coordinator  
Elly Schaefer, MIG, Inc.  
Nathan Polanski, MIG, Inc.

**Date:** March 23, 2023

**Subject:** Future of Park Lane Study

#### **I. RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Planning Commission receive an update on the Future of Park Lane study. Staff and Consultant MIG seek Commission feedback on initial study findings and draft guiding principles which will be used to further develop and evaluate vehicle closure scenarios for Park Lane.

#### **II. BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:**

Park Lane is a two block, curbless "Flexible Street" at the heart of Downtown Kirkland lined with businesses, restaurants, and retail uses. Park Lane has been designed as a pedestrian-oriented street with slow moving vehicle traffic, parking, and has removable bollards at each end to enable regular closure of the street for community events. Recently, consideration has been given to more permanent closure of Park Lane to vehicle traffic through a 2019 "Summer Sundays" pilot, which closed vehicle access to both blocks of Park Lane all day on Sundays from May through September; and "Evenings on Park Lane" which closed one block of Park Lane to vehicle access during the evenings with varying start dates and times over the summer months from 2020-2022.

At the City Council [August 3, 2022 meeting](#), staff presented two options on the future of Park Lane as either: a) an open street with parking, or b) a street closed seasonally or permanently to vehicle traffic. Council voted to evaluate seasonal or full closure of Park Lane, as well as summer evening closures, and authorized staff to hire a consultant to assist in the evaluation of options. The results of this study will be shared back with Council in June 2023 to inform a final decision on the Future of Park Lane.

The purpose of the consultant study will be to identify and evaluate the practical implementation challenges and opportunities of three options of permanent or temporary closure of Park Lane to vehicle traffic. This study will identify the infrastructure, programming, parking mitigations and other investments that would be necessary to potentially close Park Lane to vehicle traffic and successfully activate a pedestrian retail, service, and dining area in the downtown core. The operational scenarios being evaluated for possible Park Lane vehicle closure include:

1. Full year-round closure,
2. Full summer seasonal closure such as from May to October,
3. Summer evening closure such as from May to October, 6PM to 11PM (i.e., “Evenings”)

Council also has the option to take no further action, and Park Lane could remain as a flexible street with vehicle access and parking. Vehicle closure scenarios are only considered for the west end of Park Lane (Lake St to Main St) given different vehicle circulation pattern, building frontages, and uses along the street at the east end (Main St to 3rd St); and any special events which require temporary or full vehicle closures of Park Lane could occur under any scenario.

Planning Commission received a briefing on this project at the January 26, 2023 meeting which outlined the project approach and schedule and asked for Commission input on ideas and considerations for each of the closure scenarios.

### **III. STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

#### **A. Stakeholder Listening Sessions**

The project team held a series of in-person and virtual listening sessions between January 30 and February 9 to hear directly from Park Lane stakeholders about their experiences and opinions related to Park Lane, reflect on previous closure to vehicle pilots to understand what worked and what did not, discuss desired improvements, and identify potential opportunities and constraints for implementation of new street closure scenarios. 65 stakeholders were engaged in the listening sessions, including property owners, business owners, employees, community group leaders, Park Lane patrons, and nearby residents. These listening sessions were not intended to include all possible stakeholders and interested community members, but to solicit feedback from stakeholders who would be directly affected by any vehicle closure scenario and understand key considerations in developing and evaluating the vehicle closure scenarios. Broader community sentiment has also been shared with the project team via comments submitted through the City project webpage and *Our Kirkland*, as well as through prior outreach, public comments, and survey results. Stakeholder feedback is summarized below into the following key themes, topics, and questions.

1. Study purpose – some participants were uncertain why the City is considering closing the street to vehicle access.
  - What are the goals and objectives of a street closure?
  - If the big picture vision is an enhanced pedestrian connection between Lake Washington and Kirkland Urban, why would the closure only be one block? Several attendees expressed excitement around this concept.
  - Why not close the eastern block of Park Lane instead? Some participants felt the eastern block (Main St to 3rd St) would be better suited for a street closure given the fewer street-facing retail businesses and restaurants as compared to the western block (Lake St to Main St).
  - Several participants from the Park Lane business community expressed mistrust in the City of Kirkland’s decision-making process in the future of Park Lane based on past experiences.
2. Shared goal is thriving businesses – all participants agreed that they want businesses on Park Lane to be successful.

- Park Lane business attendees stated they are not supportive of a full closure to vehicles. Business owners feel a street closure will impact business due to reduced views of their business from drive-by traffic and need for on-street adjacent parking for their patrons. Business owners also expressed concerns of competition from street vendors as activation in a street closure, and some were unsure how they could take advantage of a street closure and extend business out into the street.
  - Other community members felt closing the street creates more of a destination, better serves the larger community, and would lead to increased business.
  - Some community members suggested the City offer retail enhancement strategies to provide support and resources to businesses to capitalize on a street closure (e.g. trainings, examples, permitting assistance, etc.)
  - Predictability of closure times and communications are important.
3. Shared desire to maintain Park Lane as a destination – Park Lane is the heart of Downtown Kirkland and should continue to be a destination both locally and regionally.
- Mixed opinions on whether closure of the street to vehicles makes Park Lane more or less of a destination.
  - Multimodal improvements are needed to the surrounding streets to enhance access for walking and biking (e.g. Lake St S/Park Lane and Main St/Park Lane crossings).
  - There were many participants excited about a walkable center for Downtown Kirkland and expanding walkability throughout Downtown.
  - Business owners see parking as key element of a successful commercial destination.
4. Activation is essential –programming needs to be intentional to create a destination that brings people to the street.
- Programming efforts need to be ongoing, creative, and well-funded. Several participants offered programming ideas which they thought would work well such as a farmer’s market, holiday festival, or live performances of theater or music.
  - Infrastructure needs to be flexible and should create people-friendly gathering spaces.
  - Potential need for a coordinator or concierge depending on the level of programming required, consideration should also be given for a safety officer.
  - Some businesses representatives felt that “Park Lane is not a Park,” i.e., Park Lane is a place for commerce and not for play.
  - It was noted repeatedly that despite being designed as a festival street, Park Lane has not been used regularly for events and festivals.
5. Maintenance of existing street – several participants from the Park Lane business community felt the City needs to improve the level of maintenance of the existing streetscape.
- Maintenance complaints included garbage/trash pickup and receptacle cleanliness, condition of bollards, pressure washing the pavement, blowing and collecting leaves, irrigation and weeding of landscaping, condition and design of stormwater planters.
6. Streetscape amenities and beautification – several participants asked for more amenities on Park Lane.
- Several participants noted other local areas have better amenities and are drawing business away from Park Lane (e.g. Totem Lake, Kirkland Urban)

- Need more options for public seating including covered spaces to sit during inclement weather and hot summer days.
  - Improved aesthetics are needed (e.g. planting/flowers, plants in stormwater planters).
  - Better bike parking (secured, covered, more central) would help people choose to bike to Park Lane.
7. Parking – participants had mixed opinions on the importance of the on-street spaces.
- Most participants agreed that ADA parking, loading, and commercial delivery access are the most important.
  - Business owners are concerned a loss of adjacent on-street parking spaces would lead to reduced patrons and accessibility.
  - Several community members are not concerned about parking given it is very difficult to find a parking space on Park Lane today. These participants felt 17 spaces is not significant, and that business patrons would still go to businesses from other nearby parking.
  - There is interest in the results of a broader parking study for Downtown Kirkland.
  - The library parking garage is an opportunity but needs aesthetic improvements. Some felt this parking garage is too far away from Park Lane to be a reasonable replacement, others felt it was close enough.
  - Need wayfinding/directional signage between all parking and Park Lane.
  - Some participants suggested the City explore opportunities for public-private partnerships to increase parking supply (e.g. private surface lots and nearby garages).
8. Seasonal/weather concerns – many participants had concerns regarding activation and liveliness of a closed street in the winter months and on rainy, windy, or smokey days.
- Many participants felt that a full (year-round) closure did not make sense considering the winter weather.
  - Several businesses noted their business grows in the summer months.
9. Times of day/duration for potential closure – participants had mixed opinions on the vehicle closure scenarios.
- Most business owners noted that continuing summer evening closures may be tenable, although not preferred over no street closure at all. They generally felt that mornings are important for deliveries and pickups. Convenient on-street parking is seen as important at all times of day.
  - Non-business/property owners expressed that past evening closures were too short in duration and started too late. They'd like to see extended hours explored, including for happy hour. There is significantly more interest from this group in a closure that extends seasonally or year-round.
  - Foot traffic picks up around the lunch hour and in the evenings.
10. Phasing opportunities – some participants asked if improvements be done over time.
- Pedestrianization takes time – significant interest in a gradual transition/trial period to get to a full or seasonal closure. Agreement by many participants that there will always be some (or several) patrons of Park Lane that arrive via car for various reasons. Community members see pedestrianization of Park Lane as first step towards a more walkable/livable Downtown.

- Start by trying festivals - Park Lane has not hosted many festivals since it was reconstructed, and some participants would like to see this done before an extended closure takes place.
- Maintenance – many would like to see the street better maintained in its existing condition prior to any closure or addition of amenities or programming.

## **B. Park Lane Pedestrian Corridor Enhancement Study (2010) Guiding Principles**

The initial Park Lane Pedestrian Corridor Enhancement Study, completed in 2010, outlined guiding principles for considering various design iterations of Park Lane, and resulted in the “Flexible Festival Street” concept that exists today. Those guiding principles included:

1. Develop visual connections along Park Lane (consistent with long term goal of connecting the Park to the water)
2. Enhance Park Lane as regional destination
3. Encourage economic vibrancy and diversity
4. Ensure equitable access for all
5. Create high performance greenspaces

The study also noted that “characteristics and qualities that the stakeholders wanted to see at Park Lane includ[ed]: increased space for pedestrians, retention of tree canopy, additional public seating, traffic calming, improvements to existing sidewalks, and maintenance of the public art program.” Moreover, in consideration of various design options of Park Lane, “everyone wanted a vibrant public space with successful businesses, thriving restaurants, and low impact design practices that meet the needs of the community.”

## **C. Future of Park Lane Study (Current) Guiding Principles**

The project team has developed draft revised guiding principles for the Future of Park Lane study by building upon the guiding principles from the 2010 Park Lane Pedestrian Corridor Enhancement Study, incorporating stakeholder feedback, and reviewing related adopted City plans and policies including the Comprehensive Plan, the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, the Active Transportation Plan, the Transportation Master Plan, the Transit Implementation Plan, the Sustainability Master Plan, and Policy G-11: Parking Guidelines for Downtown Kirkland.

These guiding principles will be used to further develop, evaluate, and compare the vehicle closure scenarios. The Project team is seeking Commission feedback on these draft revised guiding principles:

- 1. Enhance Park Lane as part of a larger pedestrian connection between the lakefront, Kirkland Urban, and the NE 85th Street Station Area.**
  - Prioritized pedestrian access and comfort over other transportation modes
  - Expanded pedestrian space where walking is safe, comfortable, and intuitive
  - Supportive infrastructure for pedestrians such as shelters, seating, lighting
  - Opportunities for visual connections such as public art and wayfinding
- 2. Enhance Park Lane’s local and regional destination appeal.**
  - Special event infrastructure and capacity
  - Opportunities and resources for consistent year-round programming and events
  - Inclusion for people of all ages and abilities
  - Public gathering space to support community building

- Attractive streetscape
  - Opportunities for public art and pedestrian engagement
  - Sufficient, dedicated staffing and resources for street activation and programming.
- 3. Encourage economic vibrancy and commercial variety.**
- Predictability and clear communications of street closure(s)
  - Storefront visibility
  - Convenient customer pick up/drop off and commercial delivery access and loading
  - Opportunities for businesses to expand into the public right-of-way
  - Opportunities for temporary vendors
- 4. Ensure equitable access for all.**
- ADA accessibility and proximate ADA parking
  - Safe, comfortable, intuitive walking access
  - Transit connectivity
  - Bicycle parking
  - Convenient nearby parking
  - Clear vehicle circulation and access management
- 5. Maintain a consistently functioning year-round streetscape.**
- Functional stormwater system
  - Appropriate landscaping and tree canopy
  - Sufficient, dedicated resources for consistent maintenance
  - Sufficient, dedicated staffing for infrastructure and closure requirements
  - Ensure maintenance, waste management and emergency service access

#### **IV. INITIAL FINDINGS AND STUDY PROGRESS**

##### **A. Baseline Conditions**

Following the January 2023 Transportation Commission meeting, Transportation Commissioners requested vehicle volume counts of Park Lane and adjacent streets. Based on a seven-day traffic count the city conducted in August 2022, the average daily traffic on Park Lane was 508 vehicles. At the time this count was conducted in August 2022, Park Lane was closed in the evening from 6-11 PM. Volumes on adjacent streets were compiled using the City's annual count data for 2019 and 2022. This is summarized below.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Termini</b>	<b>2019 ADT</b>	<b>2022 ADT</b>
Central Way	E of Lake St	11548	10840
Central Way	W of Lake St	16746	16116
Kirkland Ave	E of Lake St	3266	3350
Kirkland Ave	W of Lake St	1854	1990
Main St	S of Central Way	2150	2054
3 <sup>rd</sup> St	S of Central Way	8636	7761

##### **B. Vehicle Closure Scenarios**

The consultant will share a presentation of initial findings of key topics, and seek Commission input on key topics for each closure scenario:

- **Public Safety:** Overview of emergency access requirements

- Park Lane and adjacent buildings are “existing non-conforming” with current fire code requirements. For example, buildings do not have sprinklers and the vehicle access lane is 16’ rather than 20’ which is required for new developments. The fire code does not require rectification of these conditions, but new non-conforming uses are not allowed and the code does require adequate emergency access in any street closure.
- Temporary events (<180 days) utilize fire access from either end of the street closure.
- Permanent changes (>180 days) may require a fire access lane.
- Further review of scenarios and fire code will be conducted with fire marshal.
- **Infrastructure:** Discussion of street closure mechanisms for vehicle access control, and options for stormwater planter enhancements.
  - In the past, the street has been closed using temporary signage, or a removable bollard which exists on either end of the street. There are several options of closure infrastructure for each of the three scenarios, and the project team requests Commission input.
  - Based on conversations with City staff, the stormwater planters have required frequent cleaning to remove garbage and repair of the external railing due to vehicle damage. The stormwater planters are not filled to capacity during storm events. With extra storm water capacity, additional 6” of soil could be added at the base with taller, more aesthetic plants to visually fill the stormwater planters. Another opportunity would be to put partial decking over the planters. This would allow for seating and other uses while preserving maintenance access, daylighting, and air flow. If the street were to be permanently closed to cars, polluted stormwater runoff from vehicles on the street would be much less of a concern and the planters would no longer be necessary for water treatment. In this scenario, the planters could potentially be removed altogether, and stormwater could be managed in another manner.
- **Programming:** Discussion of movable and fixed elements, activation strategies, and partnership ideas.
  - City policy limits events by private organizers to two events per location per month. The limitation does not apply to City-hosted events.
  - There is currently not an event power meter and supply on Park Lane.
  - The consultant has identified infrastructure ideas for street activation such as nighttime lighting, rotating installations, interactive elements, and gateways.
  - Several programming ideas are being explored per scenario including regular/ongoing activities and events or other temporary activities that rotate over time. These are intended to be new ideas that may complement other events that happen on or near Park Lane.
- **Operations:** Overview of maintenance operations, and anticipated needs for programming staffing, access, storage, and public communications.
  - Waste Management accesses the alley south of Park Lane by entering from Main Street and reversing out. To access dumpsters in the “mini-alley” east of Starbucks, the truck stops mid-block and Waste Management employees manually roll out small dumpsters to the truck. Waste Management does not use the north-south leg of the southern alley, which intersects Park Lane mid-block.
  - For the Evenings on Park Lane closures, signs indicating street closed have been put in place by volunteers or City staff. Additional staffing needs are anticipated to close the street, set up any temporary infrastructure, program events, and to maintain any expanded amenities.



- Regular communications with the business/property owners and the public will be essential for any closure scenario.
- **Parking:** Overview of on-street parking supply and discussion of ADA and short-term parking.
  - There are 17 parking stalls on Park Lane from Lake St to Main St: 4 of those stalls are 15 min time restricted; 1 of those stalls is 30 min time restricted; 1 of those stalls is an ADA stall; and the remaining 11 stalls are 2 hour time restricted. None of the Park Lane parking stalls in the public ROW are dedicated to a particular business.
  - City Policy G-11 (Parking Guidelines for Downtown Kirkland) does not require on-street spaces be replaced/mitigated elsewhere if removed from Park Lane. A separate City work program beyond the scope of this study is focused on parking management for Downtown and will lead to updates to this policy.
  - Parking is a major concern for business owners and some residents. This is primarily regarding ADA spaces and commercial deliveries/pickups.
  - The City refers to PROWAG (Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines) for ADA parking. PROWAG requires a minimum of one accessible parking space for blocks where the total number of marked or metered parking spaces on the block perimeter is less than 25. Given this, when the street is closed to cars, the blocks connected to Park Lane (between Central, Lake, Kirkland, and Main) only require one ADA space each. Currently this exists – one on Kirkland and one on Park Lane. The one on Park Lane would be unavailable during a street closure to vehicles but could be mitigated by designating a stall in the Lake and Central lot, or on Main Street.
  - Additional short-term parking spaces (15 minute stalls) could be considered in the Lake/Central lot and on nearby streets to facilitate customer drop-off/pickup and commercial pickups/deliveries.
  - Designated stalls could be considered in the Library garage.
  - Additional parking mitigation strategies may include wayfinding signage, public/private partnerships for nearby private parking lots and garages, a parking shuttle, and aesthetic improvements to the library parking garage.

## **V. NEXT STEPS:**

Staff and the consultant will advance the three conceptual closure to vehicle scenarios in document format including narrative text, graphic visualization, and example imagery. The consultant will identify recommended capital and operational investments including planning level costs for each scenario, evaluate each of the scenarios against the guiding principles, and compare the scenarios in a matrix. All of these items will be summarized in a final report. The project team will return to Planning Commission to share these findings at the May 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

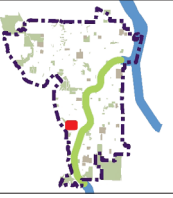
## **ATTACHMENTS:**

- A) Park Lane Context Map





## Park Lane Context Map



- Legend**
- Address
    - Other Address
    - Current Address
    - Current ADU
    - Pending Address
  - Streets
  - Parcels
  - Buildings
  - Lakes
  - Parks
  - Schools
  - Water Body Area

1:1,200

**Notes**  
This map was automatically generated using Geocortex Essentials.

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